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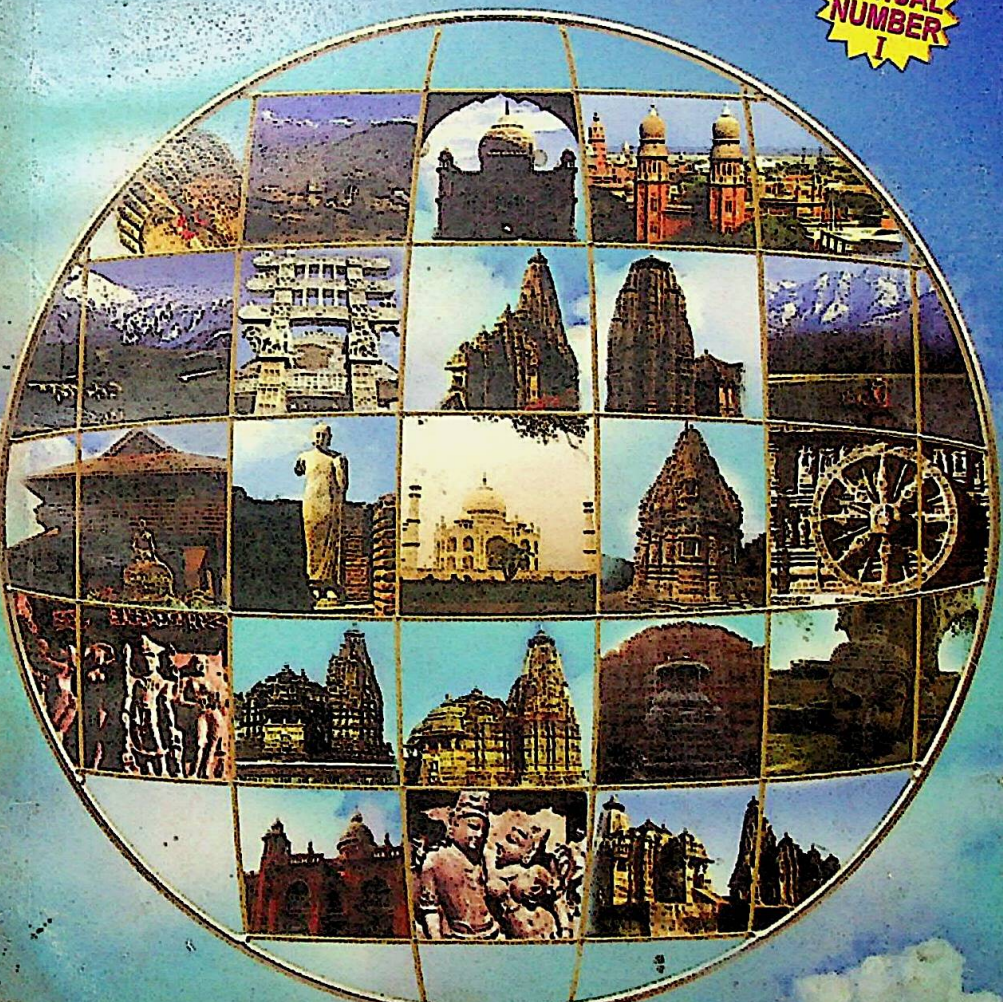

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आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः ।

aa no bhadraah kratavo yantu vishvatah

Let noble thoughts come to us from every side –Rigveda, 1-89-1

Holy and Wise

Freedom

Men! whose boast it is that ye
Come of fathers brave and free,
If there breathe on earth a slave,
Are ye truly free and brave?
If ye do not feel the chain
When it works a brother's pain,
Are ye not base slaves indeed,
Slaves unworthy to be freed!

Is truc Freedom but to break
Fetters for our own dear sake,
And, with leathern hearts, forget
That we owe mankind a debt?
No! True Freedom is to share
All the chains our brothers wear,
And, with heart and hand, to be
Earnest to make others free!

They are slaves who fear to speak
For the fallen and the weak;
They are slaves who will not choose
Hatred, scoffing and abuse,
Rather in silence shrink
From the truth they needs must think:
They are slaves who dare not be
In the right with two or three!

James Russell Lowell

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Fascinating India

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Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan,
Kulapati K.M. Munshi Marg, Chowpatty, Mumbai–400 007.
Phones 2363 1261/ 2363 4462. Fax: 022-2363 0058
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From the pages of Bhavan's Journal, August 14, 1955

Kulapati's Letter

The Hour of Freedom

The country was astir. The general elections gave the Congress an overwhelming majority of non-Muslim seats. Early in the year, the Congress nominee – Mavalankar – was elected the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. One after another, its leaders also began to form ministries in the different provinces. The British Parliamentary Delegation arrived in India, followed on March 24 by the British Cabinet Mission. Even the Princes, keen as ever to anticipate British policies, became converts to popular assemblies, the rule of law and fundamental rights for their subjects.

The general view of the country was that the Delegation was a device to postpone or sidetrack a solution of the Indian problem. This view was the result of a general distrust of all that the British did at the time but I did not agree with the view and declared so publicly. Panditji returned from London on December 7. The Constituent Assembly opened on December 9. My impressions recorded in scraps in my irregularly kept diary notes on reconstruction run thus: "Excitement everywhere. A great day for India has dawned: Indians are going to frame their own Constitution, but there is unhappiness everywhere".

My note of the day ends with the remark: "For the moment the spirit of triumph is in the air, but the smell of coming danger persists". Thus began the first hour of our freedom.

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Hinduism

Mahatma Gandhi

Believing as I do in the influence of heredity and being born in a Hindu family, I have remained a Hindu. I should reject Hinduism if I found it inconsistent with my moral sense or my spiritual growth. But on examination I have found it to be the most tolerant of all religions, because it gives the Hindu the largest scope for self-expression. It enables its followers to respect all the other religions, and to admire and assimilate whatever may be good in them. The worship of the cow is the Hindu's unique contribution to the evolution of humanitarianism. It is a practical application of the belief in the oneness, and therefore the sacredness, of all life. The great doctrine of transmigration, or rebirth, is a direct consequence of that belief. Finally, the discovery of the law of "Varnashrama" is a magnificent result of the ceaseless search for Truth.

War and Peace

Subramanya Bharati

Bhishma said, "Child, Dharma will prosper. Be it war or peace, Dharma will always win. Therefore get rid of your anger; seek equipoise. The entire humanity is like your own brothers and sisters. All human beings should love one another. Love is *taraka* and I repeat Love is *taraka.* "As he said this a drop of tear fell from his eyes. After a few days Sage Veda Vyasa came to Hastinapura. Arjuna asked him too whether war or peace was better. Veda Vyasa replied: "Both are good but we must use them in accordance with the needs of the situation." Several years later when the Pandavas were living in the forest, Arjuna asked Sri Krishna before sending him to mediate with Kauravas: "Tell me, Krishna, is war or peace better."Sri Krishna replied: "In the present circumstance peace is better. That is why I am starting to Hastinapura in search of peace."

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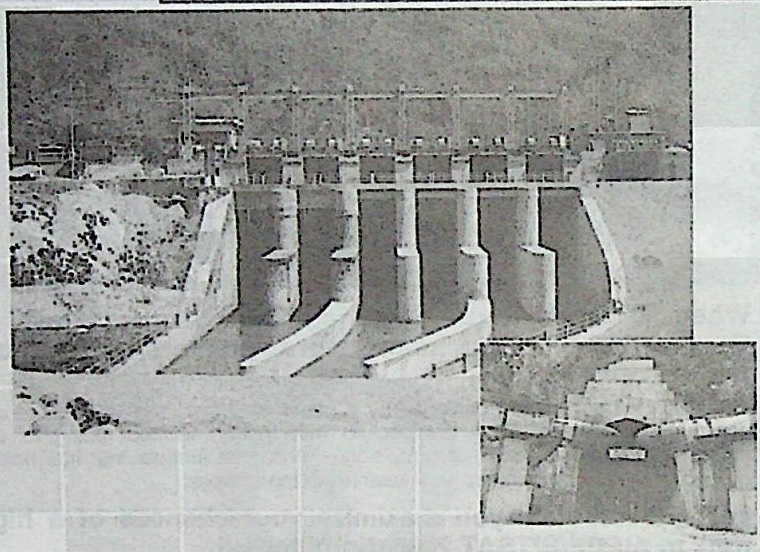
Power projects at Himalayan heights



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Letter from the President

Democracy - What it is and Should be

From the moment the clock struck the midnight hour on August 15, 1947, every child born in this country, unlike its parents or grandparents, breathed the air of a free country.

The men and women who were responsible for freedom to dawn on the horizon of the nation, were of great caliber and integrity and were incomparable patriots.

They, full of hope, wrote and bequeathed to the nation a Constitution that guaranteed such rights and liberties that should have, between them, ensured security, freedom from want and a meaningful and satisfactory life to every citizen.

Each one of those babies born on that momentous day are all 58 year old persons today. Government and many institutions retire persons of that age. What has freedom and democracy given to these people and those who were born after them? For the bulk of our people, democracy and freedom are nothing more than empty words.

In their own wisdom, our peers who wrote our constitution gave us Adult Franchise. Anyone from the age of 21 onwards, and later from 18 onwards, has been given a right to vote, a fundamental right.

What has happened and has not happened, both were anticipated events. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the philosopher-statesman and former President of India has written:

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"Democracy, in actual working, rarely permits a country to be governed by its ablest. The opinions of the mass prevail over those of the thinking few. We must strive for some better way of conducting human affairs than the lottery of the ballot box".

What has been happening in our country during the past 58 years has been lucidly, and with prophetic vision, described by Rene Guenon in his book "The crisis of the world", translated by Arthur Osborne.

What is significant is the fact that Guenon was referring to the democratic European Nations where there has been almost total literacy existing for decades.

The fact that the bulk of our people are ignorant, illiterate, gullible and poor, even after more than half a century of freedom, only magnifies the malady many times more.

Wrote Guenon, "The law is supposed to be made by the opinion of the majority, but what is overlooked is that this opinion is something that can very easily be guided or modified (i.e) opinion can be manufactured. The majority, on whatever question it may be called on to give its opinion, is always composed of the incompetent, whose number is vastly greater than that of the men who can give an opinion based on a full knowledge of the subject".

To the majority of the 58 years old amongst us and those who were born after them, freedom in its real sense, has remained frozen and inert, locked up in the words printed on reams and reams of paper.

Why is it so?

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru the first Prime Minister of Free India did have an inkling of what is missing.

He wrote " Whether religion is necessary or not, *a certain faith in a worthwhile ideal* is essential to give substance to our lives and to hold us together. We have to have a sense of purpose beyond the *material* and *physical* demands of our lives" (*Italics mine)*.

What we need to do is to breathe life into our democracy

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and make it vibrant and active.

This can happen only when we, as a Nation, begin to lay equal emphasis on moral and spiritual values as much as we do to our physical and economical values.

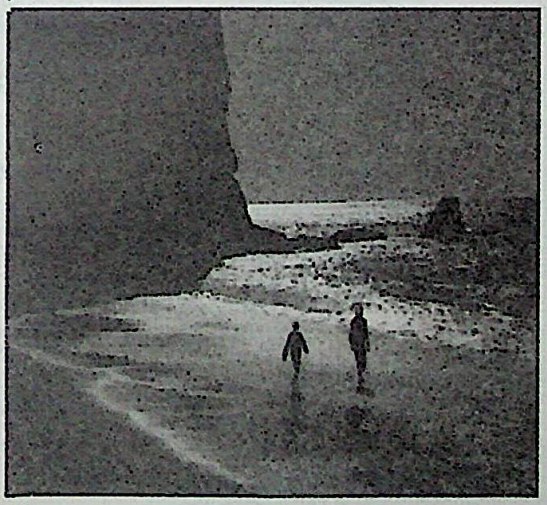
Our leaders must set an example by practicing themselves high moral standards, self-discipline, cooperation, sense of responsibility, compassion and kindness, high endeavour, transparency in actions and above all, humility.

Indeed, these values to be effective, must percolate from the top of the pyramid to its base, a base made up of a billion people, each one of whom has, besides physical needs, also intellectual, cultural and spiritual aspirations that have come down to them embedded in their genes, right from the Vedic times.

Can this ever happen? Many would wonder. It can be made to happen if only each one of us adopts the attitude of the person at a sea shore.

This person was picking up live shells on the beach brought in by the waves and left on the sands and was throwing them back into the sea. There were thousands and thousands of them strewn all around on that stretch of the beach. Another stroller on the beach who was watching him asked,

" Why are you picking these up and throwing them into the sea?"



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"I am only trying to save few lives", he replied.

"But there are thousands and thousands of them around. What difference will it make?" the onlooker persisted.

The man bent down, picked up a shell and threw it back into the sea. Pointing his finger in that direction he said with a smile, "Well, it made a difference to that one".

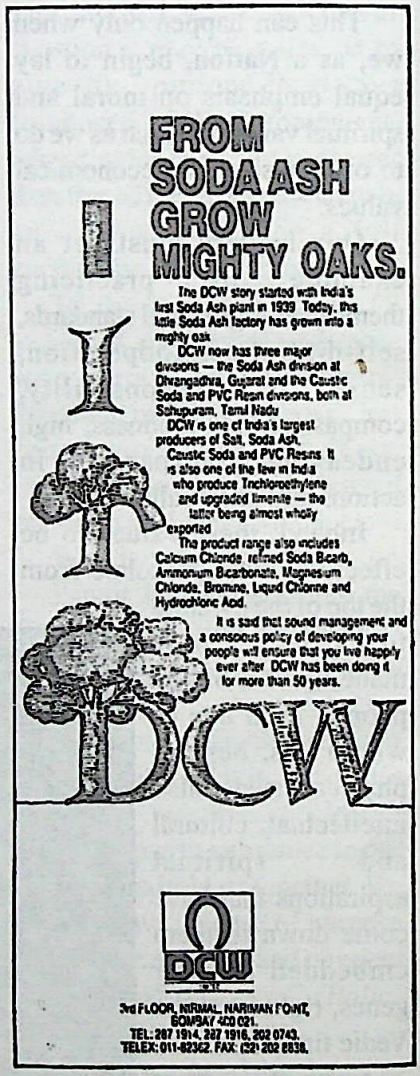
One should not be awed by the enormity of any task. Each one of should see what we can do and simply go ahead and do it, as long as what we do would benefit at least one other living being.

Each one of us has to be democratic first for democracy to be meaningful.

Jai Hind!

Pravinchandra V. Gandhi

(Pravinchandra V. Gandhi)
Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan
August 1, 2005



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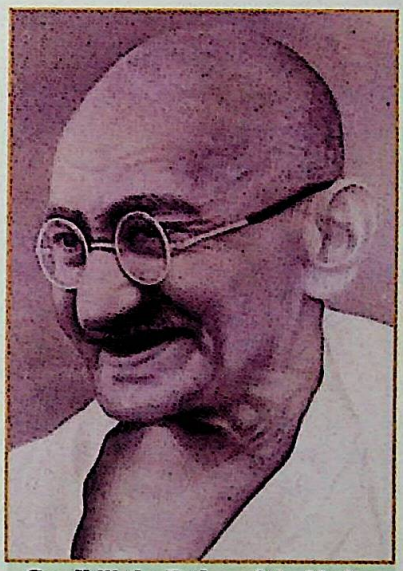
Fascinating India!

Dhiru S. Mehta*

As yet another Independence Day dawns, it provides us with an opportunity to take stock of what we have achieved during the past 58 years and where we stand in relation to what were the aims and objectives of the Freedom Movement, as laid down by Mahatma Gandhi who led us to Freedom. Many of his programmes were for the welfare of the less privileged people as well as dignity of an individual, and social reforms have been incorporated as the Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of our Constitution.

I was a young boy studying in a small school in a distant village in Saurashtra region of Gujarat when independence came. I remember the students began to ring the school bell at midnight of the 14th August 1947 to make everyone aware that our nation had become FREE. All the people in the village together with the children were chanting at the top of their voice



Gandhiji-the Father of the Nation

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Lokmanya Tilak

"Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai". It was a moment of joy and pride for everyone in the entire country. Yet there was one individual who did not go to New Delhi to join the celebrations. Had he wished or permitted, the entire nation would have gladly declared him as the Emperor of India on that day. However, he chose to be in a remote and congested area of Calcutta on that day. In fact he celebrated Independence day by fasting for 24 hours on 15th August, 1947.

In fact, on 13th August, 1947 Gandhiji had to reach "Hydari Mansion" an old abandoned ramshackle building in an indescribably filthy locality that had been hastily made ready for his stay. An excited crowd of young men stood at the gate as Gandhiji's car arrived. They shouted: "Why have you come here"? You did not come when we were in trouble. Now that Muslims have complained, all this fuss is being made over it. Why did you not go to places from where the Hindus have fled?" Some young men tried to climb onto the window of the room in which Gandhiji was sitting. Some representatives of the demonstrations were then brought in to meet Gandhiji.

Gandhiji spoke to them till 8.00 p.m. and his frank and fearless yet understanding discussions with them had a profound effect upon them. Slowly and imperceptibly the opposition began to soften. They came again the next day and this time they were completely won over. The evening prayers were held at Hyderabadi Mansion . It

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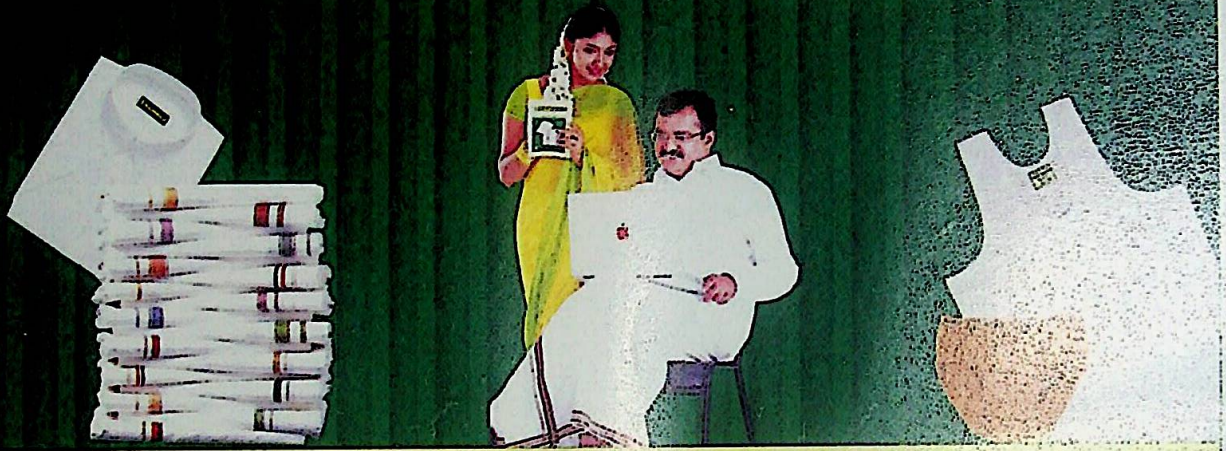

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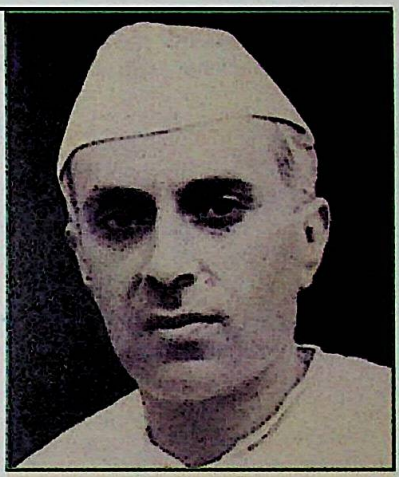
was attended by over ten thousand people. The number went on increasing every day and reached a few lakhs and the venue had to be changed to a public ground.

Many patriots, well known, [illegible] known and even [illegible] sacrificed for the cause of freedom of India. I would like to particularly remember from among the not so well known, the names of Ganesh Vidyarthi in Kanpur and Khinkhimwala in Ahmedabad and Babu Gheno in Bombay, who refused to drive a truck carrying foreign clothes and instead chose to lie down in front of it. He was mowed down by a British Sergent who drove the vehicle and killed in a street in Bombay. The next day his funeral procession was led by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. Similarly when Khinkhimwala left his home early morning on 9th August,1942 to join a march in the streets of Ahmedabad along with others carrying the National Flag, he defied the British order to give up his flag and was killed by the police. In fact when he left his home in the



Pandit Nehru

morning, his parents had told him not to surrender the flag till there is life in him.

As a young boy I used to read newspapers, that reflected the hope and aspirations and the expectations of people from such sacrifices. All had hopes that the dawn of freedom meant the rising of the sun of a golden era for the country. Whoever thought that the flood of blood will continue to flow due to communal riots and terrorism in our country and that there will be rivers of liquor. Who ever thought that the cows would continue to be slaughtered in a country which consisted of large

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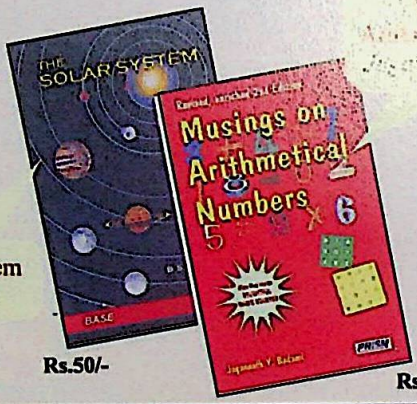

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Hindu population who worshipped cow. We have been taught and rightly so, that we must respect the religious feelings of others, the others must also respect our religious feelings including slaughter of cows and not hurting any other feelings.

Which anyone I ask, have expected that the country would budget about 40% of the annual budget in the name of defence, nuclear armaments.. etc. Who expected that big companies in the nation would make huge profits at the expense of poor citizens. Who expected that the income of the rich and their wealth would continuously grow on while a large majority of the people would continue to live below poverty line.

On this 59th Anniversary of the freedom of our nation we should pause and ponder over what, how and where have we gone wrong? The pain and suffering inflicted upon our people by the British and the cowardly princes who acted only to please their masters had come to an end. Yet communal violence, fear and exploitation continue. The British rulers have only been replaced by rulers who seem to only exploit and deprive the poor people of our country.

This enlarged issue of Bhavan's Journal, a special edition marking the Journal's entry into its 52nd year carries, apart from other usual features, a special focus on cultural and spiritual tourism.

My work with several voluntary organizations especially with Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust has taken me to the interior villages in several parts of our country, and have some first hand knowledge of economic and social conditions prevailing in rural India.

We must remember Mahatma Gandhi who not only fought and won for us our freedom but also gave us a blue print of action that would have made every individual feel that freedom had come to him. He was filled with revulsion at the injustice of the

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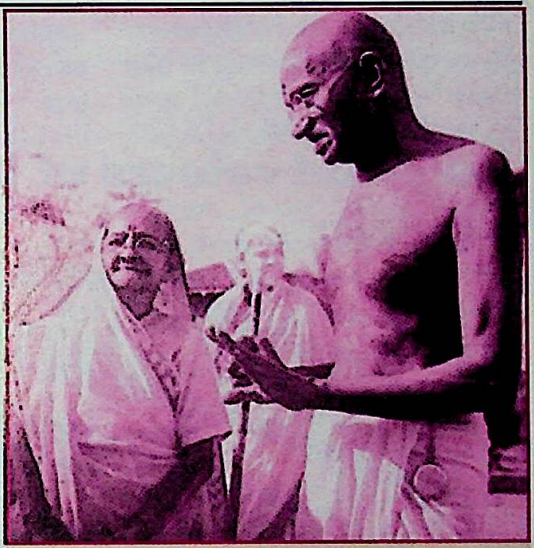
practise of untouchability that prevailed all over the country. He was horrified at the atrocities perpetrated on people based on grossly misinterpretations of religious authority. Gandhiji made supreme efforts to eradicate the scourge of untouchability, prevailing in the country since even the times of Lord Sri Krishna. He also strove ceaselessly to bring about equality between men and women in the matters of property, votes, status and social life.



Mahatma Gandhi and Kasturba

Though I have never seen Gandhiji in flesh and blood I had been all along irresistably drawn towards Gandhiji's life. As I grew up, at the suggestion of my father I began to read about Gandhiji, his work and his beliefs. As I began to study I was influenced by the ideals and concepts of the man who never preached anything that he would not practice himself. His leadership inspired less through his words and more through his actions.

Someone asked him in 1946, while he was in Kolkata for a message. "My life is my Message". He had promptly answered.

Years have flown by. There exists only a wide chasm between what Mahatma Gandhi wanted this country to be and what it has actually achieved in the socio-economic and political realm. He firmly believed in equal respect for all religions and

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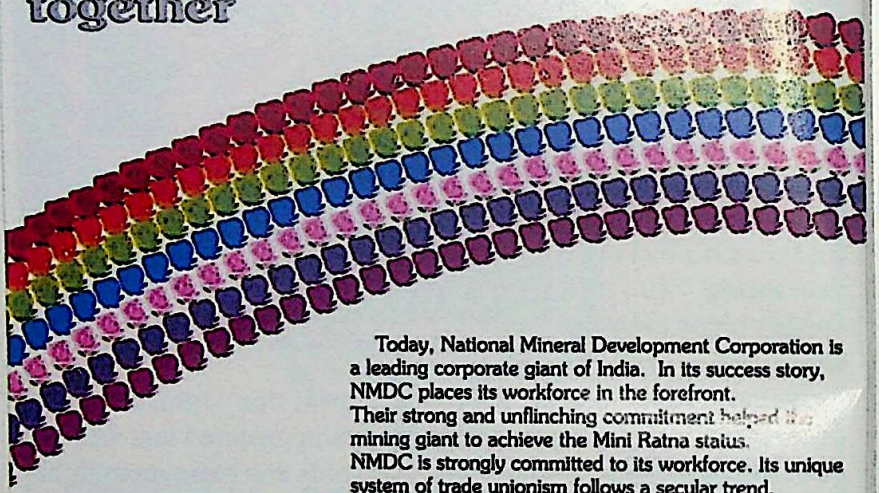

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in the ethical and moral values. He died so that the rest of us can live in peace, tranquility and communal harmony. Instead we have [illegible] a narrow definition of the [illegible] secularism.

[illegible] means *Dharma* [illegible] or a Nation without any religion. Certainly this was not Gandhiji's concept. What he espoused was religion and [illegible] which meant that one was free to follow his or her chosen faith while equally respecting the right of others to follow their chosen faiths. In other words I am entitled to be a devout Hindu but I need not condemn those of my country men who belong to other faiths such as Christianity, Islam etc.

I had stated that Mahatma Gandhi was instrumental in having taken measures to abolish untouchability in our country. However, atrocities perpetrated in the form of untouchability keep on happening regularly. I myself had a bitter experience that showed the real state of affairs.

During a recent dry spell and draught in Gujarat, an organization I am connected with had organised distribution of over 22 million litres of water free to people daily, by filling up the tanks and dry wells in the villages. In one village about 6 kms from where Mata Kasturba Gandhi had gone to jail, a boy came to me and complained that he was not even allowed to go near the well as he was an untouchable. The higher caste people relented only when they were firmly told that water would not be supplied unless everyone had access to it.

The incident only highlights the extent to which castism exists and continues to make people to act and behave with callous indifference.

Mahatma Gandhi believed in equality between men and women. During the fight for freedom, women stood along with men and fought fearlessly and as valiantly against the might of the British. They picketed shops that sold liquor and those that sold foreign goods. They filled the jails.

The newspaper reports show however, that while the

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constitution has given them equal rights, reality seems to be otherwise. There are growing number of incidents of atrocities against women such as domestic violence, molestation, rape, dowry [illegible] of at all, these incidents [illegible] seem to be on the increase.

The time has come for us to seriously consider how we have veered away and to examine what our priorities are. Sardar Patel wanted a strong India, Jawaharlal Nehru wanted a modern India. Yet after about 40 years of socialist planning and another 15 years of so called liberalization, the chasm between the rich and poor has only widened.

Business News and government statistics loudly proclaim huge foreign exchange resources and about the success of a few thousands in securing jobs abroad in the field of Information Technology. This only translates into about 5% of our population achieving a relatively higher standard of living. The increase in GDP and increase in foreign exchange reserves mean nothing to over one third of our population who still remain way below the poverty line, remaining hungry with no idea from where their next meal is going to come from.

Finally, while being on the verge of completing our sixth decade as an Independent Nation, English, the language of the people who ruled and plundered us continues to be the official language of our country. What is more, the ruling elite of our country, if they continue to have their way, would only make the importance of English more prominent and more important than our Rashtra Bhasha or the languages that our villagers speak and understand.

As we move towards the end of the sixth decade of our existence as an independent nation it is time for us to pause and ponder. To attain salvation from the trauma created by the inefficient rulers and corrupt politicians, we the people, will have to listen to the voice of truth, the voice of tolerance, the voice of compassion, the voice

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of love and ultimately the voice of the Mahatma.

Even as I am concluding this article, the television shows the spectacle of the Haryana Police engaged in a lathi charge, mercilessly beating up the industrial workers of the Honda factory in Gurgaon. I cannot see any act of provocation on the part of the peaceful protesters. It is a matter of shame for all of us that even as we enter the 57th anniversary of our Independence, peaceful protesters can be beaten up in this inhuman manner. Politicians of course would take sides for the right and wrong reasons. Those elite advocates of liberalisation and who welcome foreign investments would be more worried about any adverse effect it may have on foreign investors than having any sympathy for those helpless people who had been beaten up. Can non-party individuals and intellectuals be so insensitive to the sufferings of people? Our country has done remarkably well without foreign investment nor has liberalisation opened up great opportunities to the great masses of our people.

Whether we achieve material progress or not we should not lose our sensitivity to and compassion for those who have been beaten up with such obvious indifference.

Further, in this fight between the non-violent workers and the corporate management, whether the state should take the side of one or the other, in case it becomes necessary to do so finally, we must also decide whether consideration of the impact on foreign investors should be the sole criteria in taking the correct decision.

This special issue of Bhavan's Journal, marking the Journal's entry into its 52nd year carries, apart from other features, a special focus on cultural and spiritual tourism. This issue also highlights some of the spots that nature has endowed with an abundance of breathtaking beauty. We hope our readers would find reading them to be a rewarding experience.

JAI HIND

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Editorial

Spiritual India Unites Us All

Bhavan's Journal enters its 52nd year, exactly six years younger than Independent India, both sharing the same birthday. It is a coincidence both ordained and symbolic.

Bhavan's Journal is dedicated to emphasise and hold aloft all that is best and noble in Indian culture, tradition and values.

It seeks to invoke justifiable pride in what India truly represents in the comity of the world, based on its history, scriptures and accumulated wisdom of all epochs since the dawn of civilization.

Poet Subramanya Bharati expressed this pride and the reasons for it more than eight decades ago:

"The mighty Himalaya is ours
Nothing on earth matches its majesty.
Pure and holy is our Ganga
With not a peer in all the world,
Nowhere will one find tomes to
Rival our Upanishads of yore
Our Bharat shines in golden rays
Come, let us sing her glory"

Bharati had a vision of free India that covered all aspects of Indian life from culture and commerce, to shared history, scripture, beliefs and heroes transcending the barriers of religion, language, climatic zones and ethnic differences.

Back in 1915, he wrote of India as our Mother:

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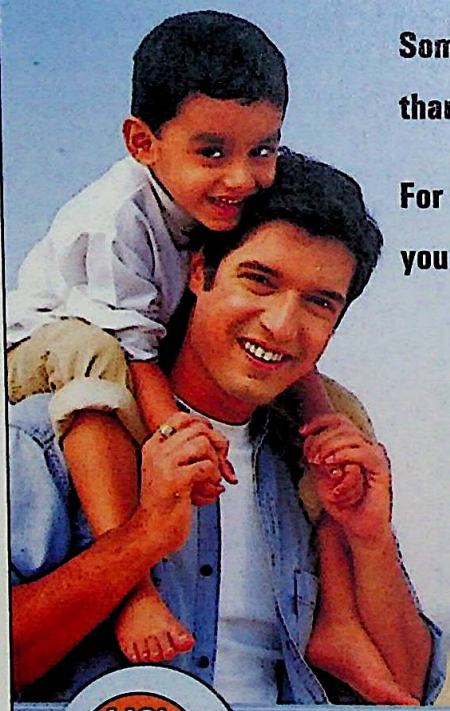

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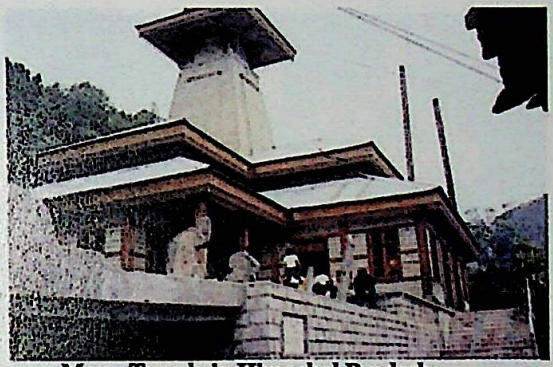
"She has thirty crore faces but with one personality. She spoke in eighteen [illegible] languages but with one thought".



Manu Temple in Himachal Pradesh

The visions of Vivekananda, Bharati and Mahatma Gandhi are not exactly the realities of modern India ridden by the twin scourges of corruption and casteism. But there are aspects of Indian life, which arouse hope of these visionaries' dreams becoming reality, at least in bits and pieces.

Bhavan's Journal concerns itself wholly with these aspects, being a firm believer in the correctibility of institutions as well as individuals. Every annual issue of the Journal highlights one such positive aspect of India's greatness.

In keeping with this practice, this issue of Bhavan's Journal seeks to highlight the lure and charm of what may be called the "Spiritual India". While other nations boast of palaces and fortresses of great antiquity to attract historians and tourists, India proudly flaunts its shrines and scriptures to emphasise the wisdom and richness of the past.

Indian history is proclaimed more in its religious places than in symbols of power and empire which came and went, failing to leave even footprints in the sands of time. Kings and statesmen are remembered and recognised by the Gods they worshipped and the temples they built.

Sadly enough, tourism in India is essentially linked to foreigners seeking a holiday at the Dal Lake in Srinagar, the Taj Mahal in Agra, the Fort in Jaipur,

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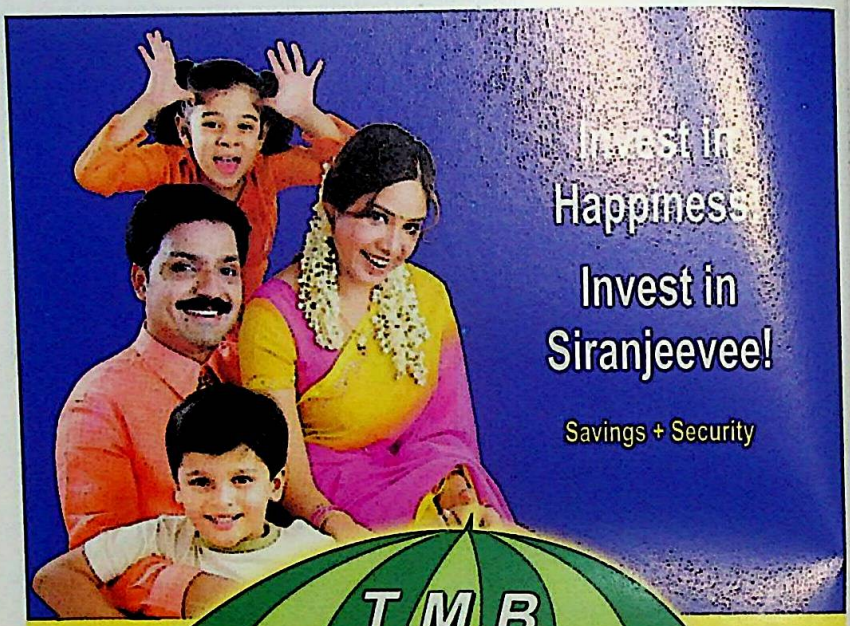

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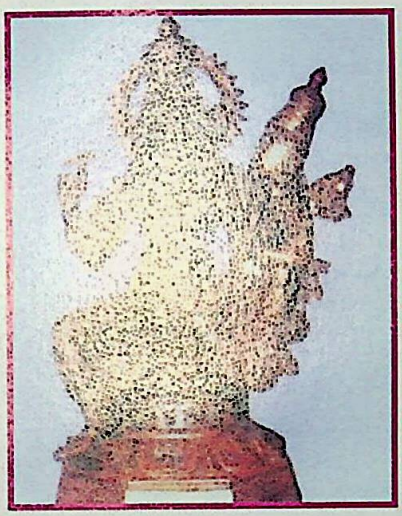

the Beaches of Goa and Kovalam and the erotic ambience of Khajuraho. But a much greater tourist traffic occurs within India between the various peoples of the land, the kind of tourism which links Amarnath in the Himalayas with Kanyakumari in the South, Kamakhya in the North-East to Dwaraka in the West and Badrinarayana in the North to Balaji in the South.

Former Union Culture Minister, Shri Jagmohan, evolved the concept of spiritual tourism as a truly effective means to integrate an India fractured and fissured by the politics of caste, creed and religion. Spiritual heritage is what identifies people of all languages, religions and provinces as Indians. The Gods are common, the epics are common, the scriptures are common, though the faiths are different and so are the languages.

This issue tries to present the enchanting India of a million diversities, presenting a scenario of a million mutinies. All the seeming differences are but the manifestations of the indivisible and indestructible core of spiritual India.

Bhavan's Journal invites its readers on a journey to discover and savour this India.

ANNUAL NUMBER 2

The August 31st issue of Bhavan's Journal will also be a special issue containing more articles on 'Fascinating India'.

Acknowledgement: Extracts from J H Dave's IMMORTAL INDIA, a Bhavan's publication, have been utilised in these two annual issues.

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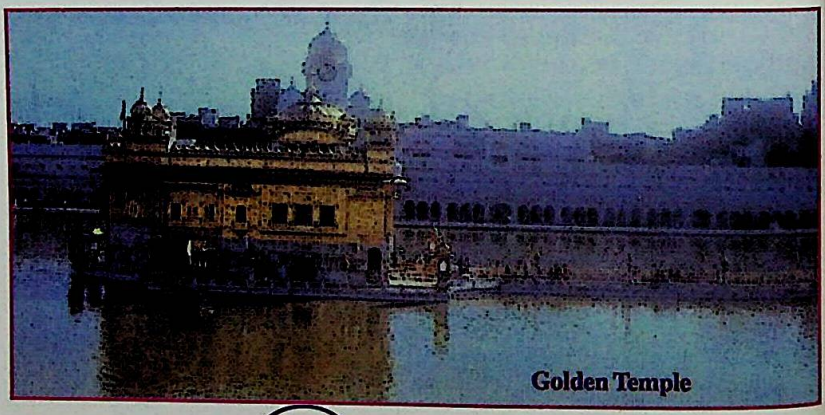
FASCINATING INDIA

A Destination, Not a Transit Halt

When the Roman civilisation was at its height, India was a destination that few attempted to reach. But it was a once-in-a-lifetime experience about which people talked about for generations.

Exotic, mysterious, yet ever inviting it was a kind of ultimate experience for the incorrigible, adventurous explorer, an expedition which could take his entire lifetime. Travel was slow, tedious, dangerous and yet exhilarating, the kind of attraction that was irresistible and yet dangerously difficult. But there were many brave and bold travellers who came to India like Hiuen Tsang, Ibn Batuta, Thomas Roe and many others. For philosophers the world over, a journey to India has always meant a pilgrimage to the land of the Vedas and Upanishads.



Golden Temple

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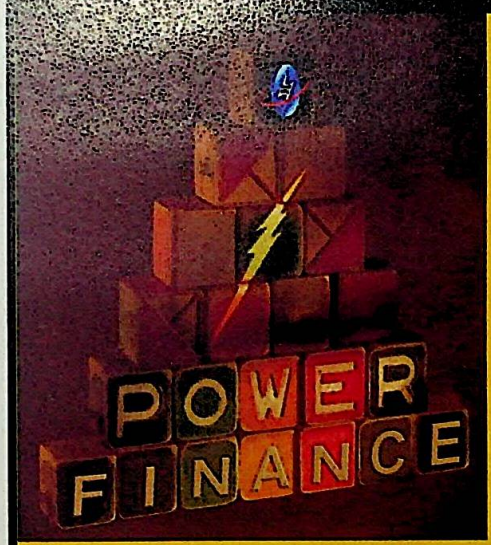

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They came, they saw, they experienced and fortunately for posterity, they wrote. Their writings provide the clues about the wonder that was India. Their reminiscences provide details that make up the composite history of India.

India has always been a destination and not a wayside station to be passed through by a traveller, until the East Indies, Australia and New Zealand were discovered. India never solicited tourists in the modern sense of the word. Not for India the kind of tourism culture which has been built up by some countries in Asia with a view to grabbing dollars.

Tourism is a modern word. It came into common usage when the concept of a vacation or a holiday developed. Tourists came to forget and relax. But a visit to India is, even today, a pilgrimage for the discerning tourists. People came to India to see, observe and learn.

As a veteran India visitor said: "Once you have been there, you will never be the same." The cumulative effect of the visit will remain a lifetime experience. While India does not have beaches like that of Spain, Southern Italy and French Riviera, it does have beaches like Kovalam in Kerala, Santhome Beach in Madras, Aguada in Goa and Gopalpur on Sea in Orissa. There may not be people sunning themselves in the Western style, but for the connoisseur the beaches have a breathtaking beauty which many would not have seen anywhere else.

India has rich fare for all varieties of tourists-for the humblest, shoestring-budget tourists, for the discerning and appreciative Indophile, for the most demanding and sophisticated high flying world traveller, for the gourmet and last but not the least for the familiar tourists' prototype who has come to India only to see the Taj, but who stays on, or goes back, because no one had told him that there was more to India than the Taj, the Maharajas, the elephants, the tigers, the mountains and the dust, the dirt,

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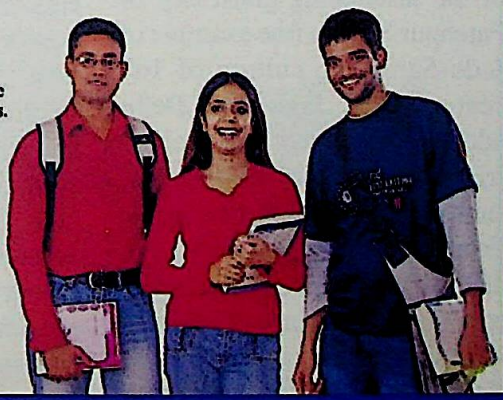

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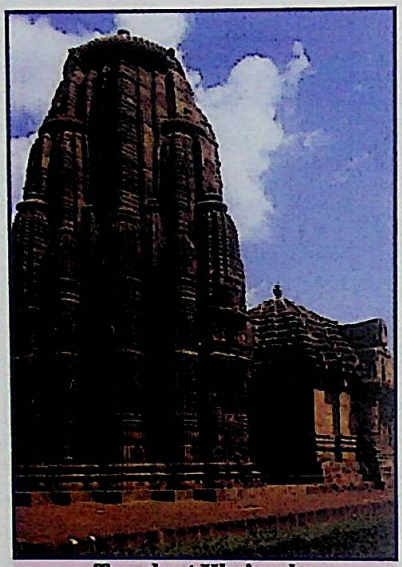

Temple at Khajuraho

the disease and the beggars- the worn out cliché.

Whether it is the Taj at Agra or the fascinating ghost city of Fatehpur Sikri, a fine example of Indo-Saracenic culture of 16th century India, Jaipur and Delhi add to the sides of the 'golden triangle'. Of course, the right time to visit is November to February. For tourists who can afford the 'Palace on Wheels' trip, the visit begins at Delhi and gives a round trip through Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. A train trip to the historic city of Jhansi from where one can travel to Khajuraho that is adorned by world famous erotic sculptures.

A visit to the metropolis of Bombay, the commercial capital of India, can be topped off by a quick trip to Elephanta, Ajanta and Ellora caves.

Coming to Southern India, Karnataka offers the most agreeable climate during the summer months. The itinerary suggested for a Southern 'Palace on Wheels' project begins from Bangalore with an overnight halt each at Mysore and Bandipur, whereafter you go to Hassan for sight seeing at the nearby Halebid and Belur temples. From Hassan you go to Hospet for a couple of nights' halt, with a day time trip to Badami thrown in. Thereafter, you can go over to Bijapur and then fly to Bombay from Belgaum, or go by train to Goa. This would make a really rich seven to eight days package, giving you an opportunity to look at some of the greatest temple carvings in world heritage (Somnathpur, Halebid and

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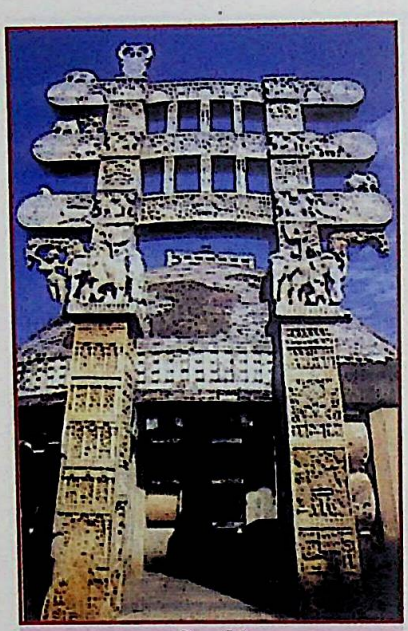

Sanchi

Belur), the Hampi ruins near Hospet, which are among the most remarkable and well-preserved ruins of ancient civilisation in the world heritage, and the remarkable temples group at Badami, Pattadakal and Athole, where you can see the transition between cave temple and structural temples.

In Pattadakal, particularly, you can see in one place almost all the styles of temple architecture in India.

The other remarkable destinations in Southern India not to be missed, inspite of the somewhat muggy weather in Chennai (Madras), are Madras and Mahabalipuram, with a trip thrown in to Pondicherry and back. This makes a rich package through a country side which boasts of a great heritage of stone-craving art and temple architecture, not to speak of the highly rated beach at Mahabalipuram.

A visit to Kerala during the 'Onam' festival in July can be a memorable experience – with all the excitement and spectacle of the boat races, the elaborately organised dance events and the parades of richly-caparisoned elephants.

Mention has to be made of the Bandipur Wildlife Sanctuary while speaking of the Bangalore-Hospet round-trip. Sanctuaries like Kaziranga (Assam), Corbett National (U.P) and Bandipur/ Nagarahole in Karnataka, offer the most agreeable way of viewing wildlife in its natural setting-conscious and

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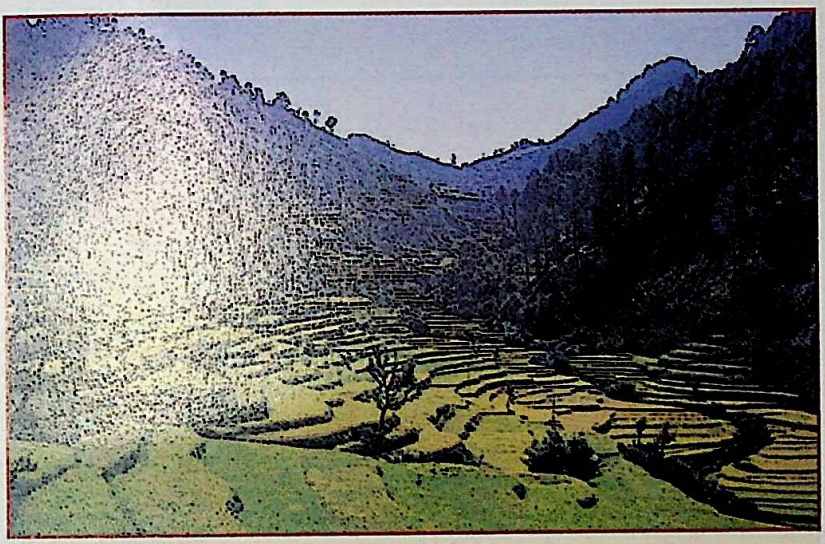

Valley in the Himalayas

painstakingly preserved habitat. Here again, India is not for those who would like a tiger to be brought to their hotel room – as I believe they almost do in some of the well-known safari destinations of the world.

A visit to India is incomplete without seeing Calcutta (Kolkata, the city of joy, once described as the second city of the British Empire, the citadel of the 'Raj'.

From there one can go to Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh, also called Kashi, a holy place for the Hindus.

Tagore, the first Indian Nobel Laureate belongs to Calcutta, while Madan Mohan Malaviya founded the famous "Benares Hindu University" at Varanasi. Calcutta can also be a base for visiting Darjeeling and other resorts in North-Eastern India such as Mizoram, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh. At Darjeeling one can see a breathtaking sight on a clear morning from the Tiger Hill of Mount Everest in all her misty glory looking down on us from 29002 feet.

(From internet – Author unknown)

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Swami Vivekananda's Amarnath Yatra

B. N. Dhar

Despite threats and violence, the holy pilgrimage to the sacred cave-shrine of Amarnathji is already underway. The cave is situated in high Himalayas of north Kashmir. The main function at the holy cave-shrine is, however, to take place on the auspicious occasion of Shravan Purnima Raksha Bandhan.

A large number of devotees offer their reverence then to the holy ice-lingam of Lord Shiva, which is reported to wax and wane along with the phases of the moon.

On 11th June, 1898, Swami

Vivekananda and group

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The lofty Himalayas

Vivekanandaji left Almora for Kashmir with some of his foreign devotees. It was an exhilarating experience to visit the vale of Kashmir, both for Swamiji as well as his foreign disciples.

The nature's captivating beauty which surrounded them on all sides, held the party virtually in thrall; Swamiji particularly was in high spirits. At Srinagar, the party stayed in houseboats on river Jhelum, the afternoons being spent in long walks while conversing on spiritual matters. The surrounding ambience of tall mountains and shimmering lakes, flowers and fragrance, made Swamiji long for quiet and solitude to be spent in deep contemplation and meditation.

Thus, at times he would quietly leave the group alone and wander amidst the surrounding meadows and fields, in quest of matters beyond the ken of ordinary mortals.

"At no time", Sister Nivedita was to write later, "Would it surprise us had some one told us that today or tomorrow he would be gone for ever...." At Anantnag, Swamiji decided to visit the holy Amarnathji cave along with Sister Nivedita. Once

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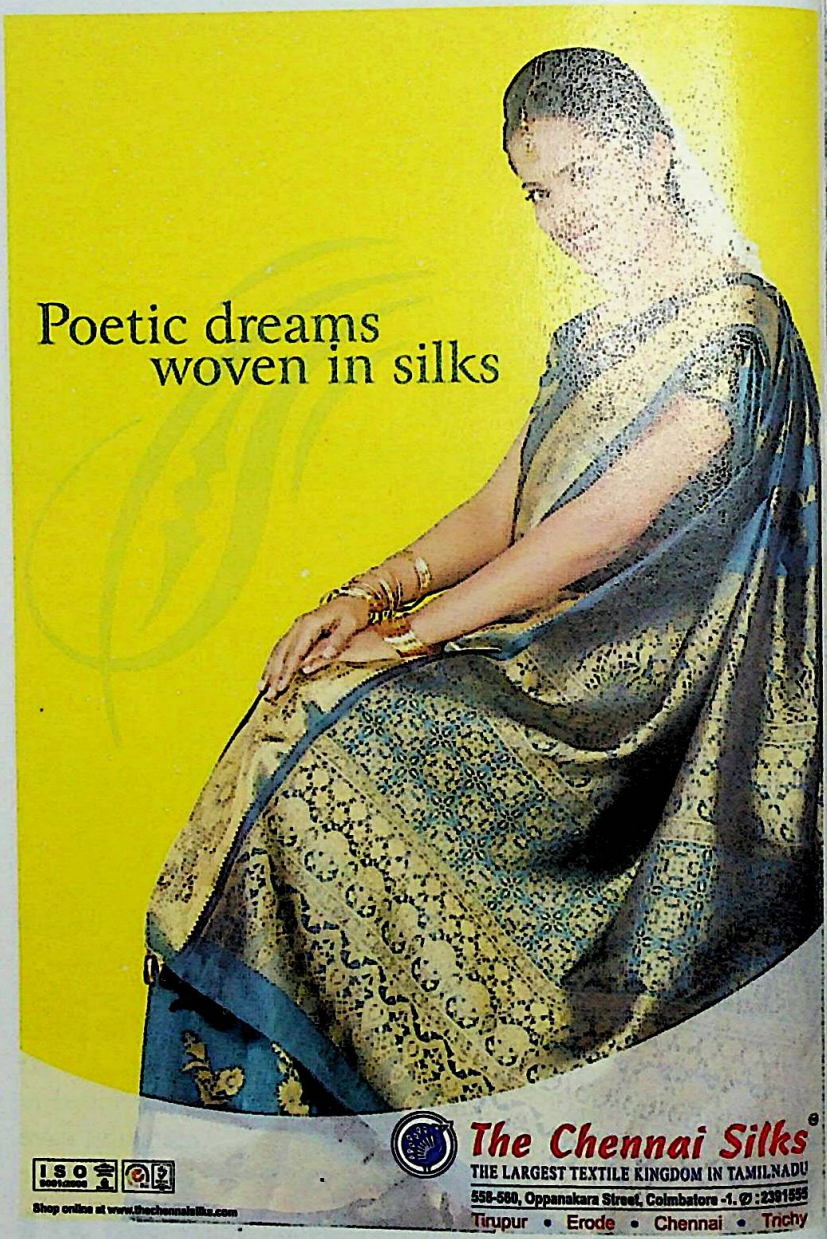

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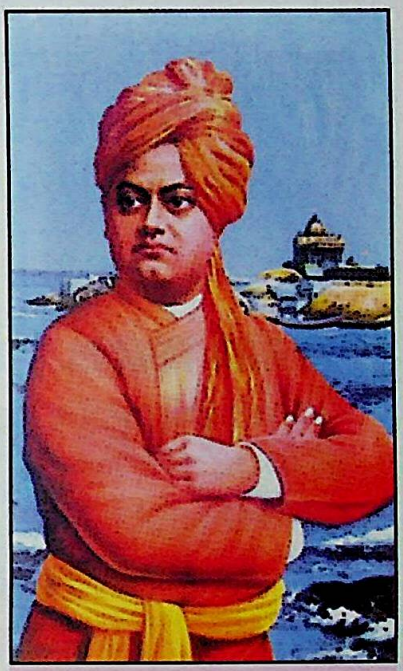
he decided to make the pilgrimage, he meticulously observed all the rites enjoined upon the pilgrim. He ate one meal a day [illegible] in the orthodox [illegible] sought solitude as far [illegible]ble and practiced [illegible].

On 2nd August, 1898, Swamiji arrived at the last town, after traversing over high and difficult mountain paths. At the far end of the holy cave, almost in a darkened corner, was the shimmering ice lingam of the Lord. Swamiji's naked body, smeared with ash, shook at the unearthly sight he beheld; his face radiating a glow of intense ecstacy. He prostrated himself before the holy *lingam*, amidst the loud chants of religious hymns by the devotees.

"The Swami almost fainted. He had the vision of Siva Himself. The details of the experience he never told, except that he had been granted the grace of Amarnath, the Lord of immortality, not to die until he himself willed."

What Swamiji saw in the sacred cave-shrine had traumatic spiritual impact on him. His heart was found dilated and remained so for the rest of his life; a blood-clot appeared in his left eye.



Swami Vivekananda

For days together, after the visit to the holy cave, Swamiji talked only of Lord Siva. He was emphatic: "the image was the Lord Himself. It was all worship there." And he added, "I have never seen anything so beautiful, so inspiring!"

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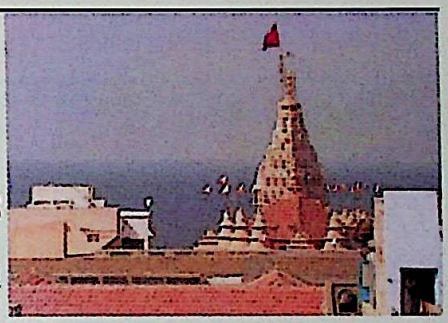
Many Heavens for the Pilgrim



Pilgrimage or Tirthatan (tirthayatra) is the oldest way of travelling from one place to another in India. The destination could be any place with a legend attached

From the high hills of Himalayas to the small islands in Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal and from the fertile plains of Northern India to the Southern Peninsula, Hindu pilgrimage centers are in thousands and multiplying.

At the southern most land tip of India, where the Arabian Sea, the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal meet, lies **Kanyakumari**, an important pilgrim centre. Kanyakumari is famous for its beach and the spectacular sunrises and sunsets, especially on full moon days. Kanyakumari is also famous for its vast green stretches of paddy fields, rich forests, coconut groves and mineral sands.

Kanyakumari has been named after the Goddess Kanyakumari Amman who is the popular deity of the area. Legend has it that Goddess Parvati, in one of her incarnations as Devi Kanniya, did penance on one of the rocks

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Balaji, Tirupati

of this land's end to obtain the hand of Lord Shiva.

Two rocks reach out of the ocean, southeast of the Kumari Amman temple. One of these is Sri Padaparai, where the footprints of the virgin goddess are to be seen. On this rock, Swami Vivekananda is said to have sat in deep meditation; and here stands the Vivekananda Rock Memorial, built in 1970.

Tirupati, one of the richest temples in the country, is the most venerated Vaishnavite shrine of Lord Venkateswara. It was patronised by the Pallavas, the Cholas, the Pandyas and the Vijayanagar kings. 130 kms from Madras (Chennai), this temple is located in the southern Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh. 'Tiru' in Tamil means 'Sri'. Hence Tirupati translates to Sri Pati or Sri Mahavishnu.

According to the Puranas, the range of Tirumala hills represent the body of Vasuki and Adisesha, on which Lord Vishnu, the Protector of the world, rests. The seven hills represent the seven heads of the serpent.

During the rule of the Vijayanagar dynasty contributions made to the temple increased enormously. Krishnadevaraya had statues of himself and his consorts installed at the portals of the Tirupati temple, and these statues can be seen to this day. There is also a statue of Venkatapati Raya in the main temple at Tirupati.

Rameshwaram is an island situated in the Gulf of Mannar at the very tip of the Indian peninsula and is a very important pilgrim centre of the Hindus.

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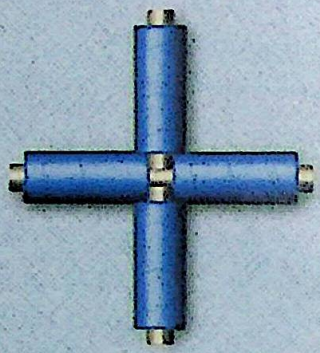

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Rameshwaram is the place from where Lord Rama built a bridge across the sea, to rescue his consort Sita, from Ravana. This is also the place where Rama worshipped Shiva to absolve a[illegible] of killing Ravana. Both the Vaishnavaites and Shaivites visit this pilgrimage place.

Rameshwaram is significant for the Hindus as a pilgrimage to Benaras is incomplete without a pilgrimage to Rameshwaram. The presiding deity is the Linga of Sri Ranganatha, which happens to be one of the twelve Jyotirlingas of India. Rameshwaram is also popularly referred to as the 'Benaras of the south'. In order to attain Moksha it is believed that the visit to Rameshwaram is mandatory. Rameshwaram is one of the most visited pilgrim sites in India.

This island, 31 miles long and 7 miles wide, is described in the Puranas as the Gandhamadana Hill. It is one of the most highly venerated places in India. It derives its name from Sri Rama who installed one of the twelve primeval *Jyotirlingas* of Lord Sankara here, and named it after himself. It typifies the cultural unity of India, to describe which the phrase invariably used is "From the Himalayas to Setu Rameswaram."

Dwarka, on the west coast of Gujarat on the shores of the Arabian Sea, features in most of the legends surrounding Lord Krishna. It is from here that the grown-up Lord Krishna is supposed to have ruled his kingdom.

Dwarka is sanctified as the place where Lord Vishnu slew the demon Shankhasura. The Puranas mention the 12 Jyotirlingas or columns of light representing Lord Shiva, which manifested in different parts of the country. One of these, located in Dwarka, is known as the Nageshwar Mahadev. One of the most popular temples in Dwarka is that of Rukmini, Krishna's wife, considered an incarnation of Goddess Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and beauty. The Sharada Peetha, one of the four Maths established by

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Jagatguru Shankaracharya, is situated here.

In Puranic times, present-day Dwarka was known as Kushasthali or Dwaravati and was the most important spot on the Saurashtra coast. Lord Krishna, after slaying Kansa, left Mathura and travelled with the entire Yadava community to the coast of Saurashtra where he founded a town and named it Swarnadwarika. There is an argument among orientalists regarding the exact location of the original Dwarka. The puranas say that the magnificent city of Krishna was sunk.

The place which is, at present, a port in the western part of Saurashtra is popularly identified with the original Dwaraka and is considered as one of the seven holy cities, a visit to which is said to give liberation.

Ayodhya, a very holy city is an important pilgrimage site. Lord Rama was born here. It was the capital of Koshala. It is on the banks of the Gogra (Ghaghara or Saryu) River.

Ayodhya during ancient times was known as Kosaladesa. Ayodhya is presently a city of temples yet, all the places of worship here are not only of Hindu religion. In Ayodhya several religions have grown and prospered simultaneously and also at different periods of time in the past. Remnants of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Islam can still be found in Ayodhya.

One of the most important events during July / August is **Amarnath Yatra,** the Holy Pilgrimage made in obeisance to Lord Shiva. This is an annual event when thousands of Hindus from different corners of the Globe visit **Amarnath caves.** The pilgrims trek from Pahalgam to these caves and worship the great ice Lingam. Legend has it that Shiva recounted to Parvati the secret of creation in a cave in Amarnath.

The Ice Lingam

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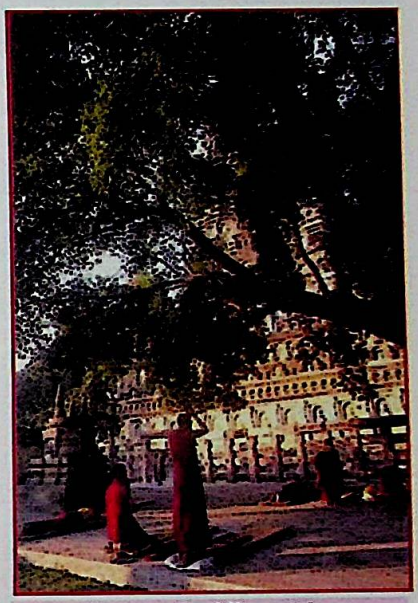
Unknown to them, a pair of mating doves eavesdropped on this conversation and having learned the secret, are reborn again and again, and have made the cave their eternal abode.

Amarnath is 145 km east of Srinagar in Kashmir. There is an ice Shiva-lingam here that changes size with the seasons, and also as the moon waxes and wanes it becomes bigger and smaller. On the full moon day the *lingam* is about 6 ft high. Each year on the full moon day of July-August (Sravana) when the Shiva-lingam attains its maximum height there is a festival at this cave temple. It is said that Lord Shiva first appeared on this day.

Buddha – Gaya

Buddha-gaya is seven miles south of Gaya. Siddhartha left his house at the age of twenty-nine, became an ascetic for six years, and wandered in the vicinity of Rajagriha and Uruvila (near Gaya). He practiced penance at Uruvilva. Having bathed in the Nairanjana (Lilajan) river, he sat under a



Gautam Buddha getting enlightenment under the Pipal tree

Pipal tree at Bodh-Gaya. He received full enlightenment under this tree at the age of thirty-five and became Buddha, Tathagata and Sakyamuni. He moved on to Sarnath and started preaching. Eight months in every year he spent on the move and after preaching for forty-five years he had his Mahaparinirvana at the age of eighty, in 483 B.C.This Bodhi tree is the oldest and the most venerated tree in the world.

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Buddhist traditions say that the tree was destroyed by Tisyaraksita but revived by Asoka. In Bu[illegible] Gaya there is the famou[illegible]ple of Buddha and the [illegible]

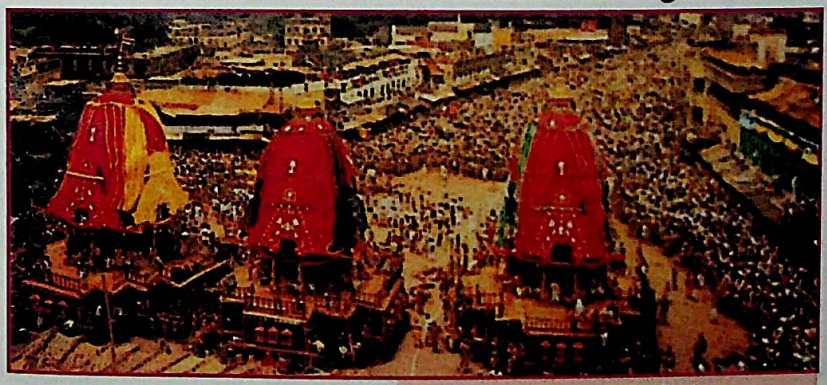
The [illegible] or the Vajrasana where Buddha performed penance, is below the tree and is de[illegible] the centre of the Universe. A number of Buddhist relics have been excavated in this area.

Puri, Jagannathpur

Orissa or Utkala has Jaipur (city of sacrifices) as Parvati-kshetra or the city sacred to Parvati, Konarak as the Surya-kshetra, Bhuvaneswara as the Hara-kshetra and Puri as the Vishnu or Purushottama-kshetra. Jagannath or the Lord of the world stays here in the form of Krishna. This famous Sri Mandir has three wooden images, of Krishna, his elder brother Balarama, and their sister Subhadra. Another name for the Lord in the form of a wooden image is Daru Brahma.

Puri is 310 miles from Calcutta. The temple is situated on a gentle slope, known as Nila Parvata, by the sea. *Brahma-purana* calls it the best of all *tirthas*, ten *yojanas* in extent. Lord Purushottama, supreme over inconstant things and the eternal, abides in this kshetra.

Sankaracharya, one of the greatest Hindu philosophers, established four big monasteries



Ratha Yatra at Puri

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Vithoba and Rukmini at Pandharpur

at Sringeri in Mysore, Dwaraka in Saurashtra, Badrinath in Himalayas and Puri in Orissa. The Puri math is known as the Govardhana Peetha.

Pandharpur

Pandharpur, situated forty miles west of Sholapur, is one of the most frequented places of pilgrimage in Maharashtra. It is on the banks of river Bhima, also known as Chandrabhaga, which is a tributary of Krishna. The chief attraction of the town is the temple of Vithoba situated in the centre and on the river bank.

The temple is built on an area 350 x 170 feet. It has six gates. The chief or the front gate on the east side is called the Namdev gate, Namdev being the first great Vaishnava saint of Maharashtra who flourished in the 13th century A. D. Near the first step there is a brass bust of Namdev. The tradition is that at this place there is the *Samadhi* of Namdev, the tailor-saint who

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was the [illegible]ment of Pandharpur. Opp[illegible]e Nam[illegible]ev's bust is a stone which is w[illegible]shipped as the [illegible]hode of Cho[illegible]mela, a Mahar devotee o[illegible]ba who lived about 127[illegible]

In th[illegible]mber or *garbhagriha* o[illegible] 6 feet, is the image of Vithoba, also called Pandurang, R[illegible]mala, or Vithalnath. T[illegible]anding image of stone is three feet nine inches with a base of one foot square.

Nashik

On the opposite side of Nashik is Panchavati and between them flows the river Godavari. The river starts from the hill Brahmagiri near Tryambak, about twenty miles from Nashik.

There are sixty temples in Nashik, which has the reputation of being the Kashi of this area. There are many reasons for this- the holiness of Godavari, association of Nashik and Panchavati with Rama, Sita and Lakshmana, the vicinity of the Jyotirlinga of Tryambakeswara and the fact that Nashik was the second city of importance of the Peshwas. Godavari is called Ganga of the south .

In 1680, the Deccan Viceroy of Aurangzeb destroyed twenty-five temples at Nashik. It was under the Peshwa's rule (1750 to 1818) that most of the large existing temples were built.

The temple of Kala Ram or Sri Ramji in Panchavati is considered one of the finest modern temples in Western India. The whole temple is simple, elegant and finely finished. The temple, built by Sardar Rangrao Odhekar in 1782, is supposed to stand on the spot where Rama lived during his exile.

Mathura

Mathura is situated on the right bank of Yamuna between Delhi and Agra and is reputed to have been founded by Shatrughna, brother of Rama. The place was known as Madhuvana and Madhu ruled it. He and his son Lavana challenged Rama who sent Shatrughna to deal with them. Madhu and Lavana were killed in the fight and Shatrughna

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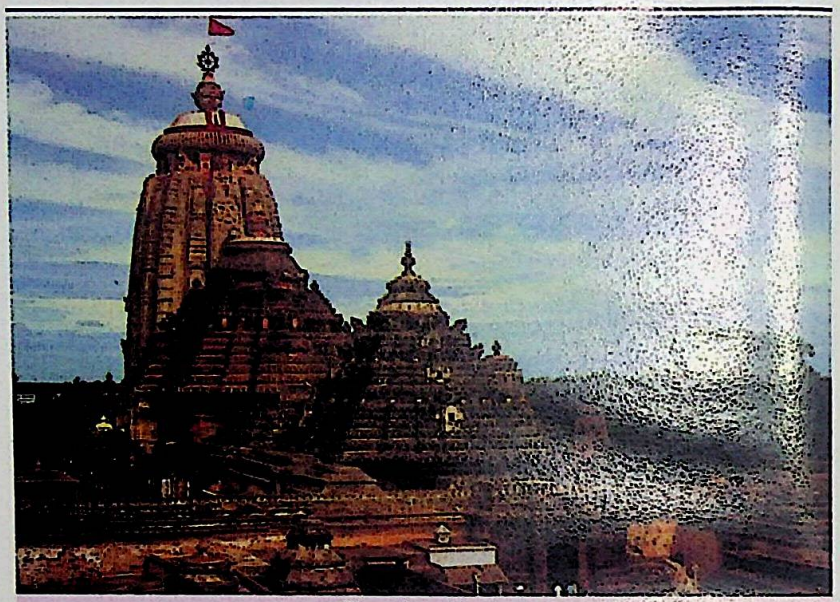

Temple at Puri

founded the city of Mathura.

From the Solar race, the area came under the Yadavas. The Yadu king Ugrasena had a son Kamsa and a daughter Devaki. The latter was married to Vasudeva. Kamsa was a tyrant and it was predicted that the eighth child of Devaki would kill him. Kamsa, who was supposed to be the great demon Kalanemi in human form, usurped his father's throne and when he learnt of the prophecy, imprisoned his sister and Vasudeva and put to death six of their children immediately after they were born. The seventh embryo was miraculously transferred to Rohini, another wife of Vasudeva, and Sankarshana (a son born of extraction and transference) or Balarama was born of her. The eighth child born at Mathura in the prison cell was Krishna, worshipped by Hindus as Purna Purushottama and the eighth incarnation of Vishnu.

Mathura is a celebrated centre of pilgrimage. Varaha Purana says that the Mathura

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Mand[illegible] 20 *yojanas* in me[illegible]y one bathing in [illegible] is p[illegible]ied of all sins.

Fa-Hien [illegible]ied Mathura the Peacock [illegible]y. In his day Buddh[illegible]as flourishing here. Hie[illegible] also visited it and foun[illegible] circuit. In his day there were five Deva temples, three stupas built by Asoka, twenty [illegible] monasteries and 2000 Buddhist priests.

Mathura was a famous centre of Jainism during the reigns of the Kusana kings. Here and there are ruins of a Jain shrine of the pre-Christian period and a number of small inscriptions, images, tablets, arches, etc. from 1st century onwards. References are also available of Jain teachers and the donors.

Mathura was a centre of Bhagavata religion, prior to Buddhism and Jainism, even before the 6th century B.C. Later on Buddhism and Jainism flourished in this area. From the statement of Hieun Tsang, it appears that in the 7th century A.D. orthodox Hinduism was again re-establishing itself and was equally prominent. By the eleventh century, Mathura was dominated by orthodox Hinduism. Buddhism disappeared in 1017 A.D. when Mohmud of Gazni burnt the city.

Ujjain

The Kumbha Mela takes place in Ujjain every 12 years when Jupiter is in Scorpio. It is held at Prayaga, Haridwar and Nasik when Jupiter is respectively placed in Taurus, Aquarius, and Leo.

In Ujjain the most famous spot is the temple of Lord Mahakala. It is one of the twelve Jyotirlingas of Sankara. The temple stands near a lake and has five storeys, one of which is underground. The way leading to the sanctuary is dark and lamps are kept constantly burning.

The general belief is that whatever is offered to Siva becomes Nirmalya and cannot be used again; but this rule does not apply to the Jyotirlingas. Here not only the Prasada offered to the deity can be accepted but even the leaves of the Bilva tree

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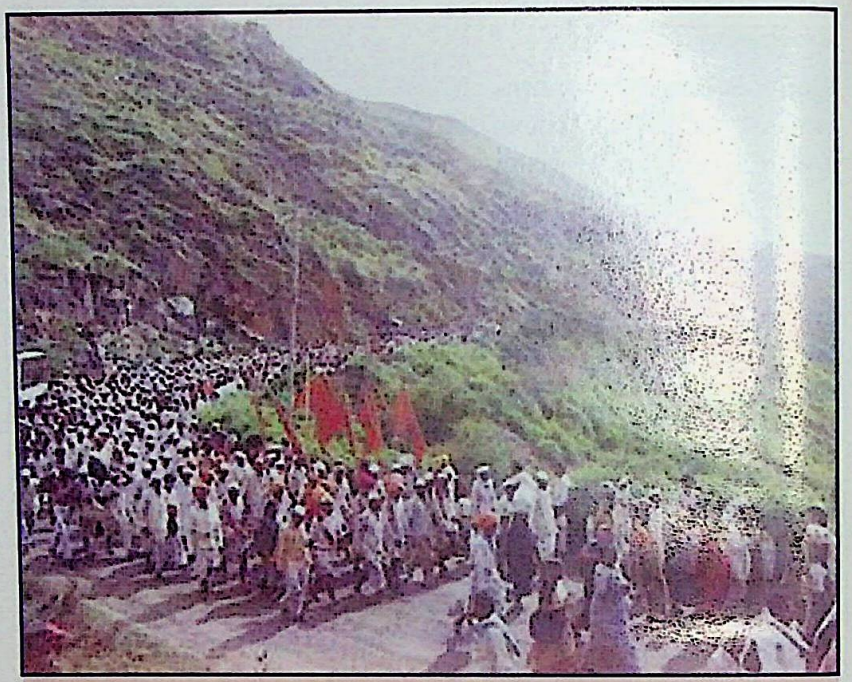

Going on a pilgrimage

once offered to God can be reoffered.

Chitrakut

Chitrakut is one of the most sacred places of Hindu pilgrimage. Sri Rama with Sita and Lakshmana stayed here in the Treta Yuga. The celebrated Hindi poet Tulsidas had the vision of Sri Rama at this place. Near this hill flows the river Payasvini or Paisuni, also called Mandakini. Near Chitrakut is the town of Sitapur on the bank of the river Mandakini and it is mostly inhabited by priests. There is a Rama-ghat, also a temple of Rama and Lakshmana.

Gaya

Tristhali is the name given to the three most holy places of pilgrimage for Hindus, Prayaga, Kasi and Gaya. Gaya is 192 miles from Calcutta and 127 miles from Banaras. It is said that liberation or *Mukti* is achieved in four ways. The first way is by acquiring the true knowledge of

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Brahma[illegible]. The second is by performance of *sraddha* at Gaya. The third way [illegible] by getting oneself killed [illegible] protecting a [illegible]ow and the fo[illegible] by residing at Kurukshe[illegible]

Kurukshetra

Kurukshetra is [illegible] miles east of Ambala on the Delhi-Ambala line. This place was the centre of Vedic civilization in the Brahmanic period. Gods performed lengthy sacrifices here and Kurukshetra was the sacrificial altar.

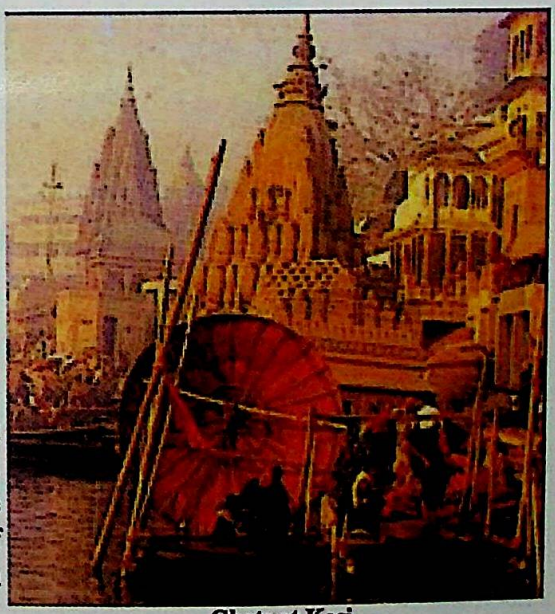
Kanchi

Brahmanda says that Kasi and Kanchi are like the two eyes of Siva, and that Kanchi, though it is a well-known Vishnu *tirtha*, is capable of giving one an abode in the presence of Siva.

Asoka had built several *stupas* here. Kanchi was the birthplace of Dharmapala Bodhisatva.

The Chinese pilgrim further records that in the seventh century when he visited the Tondai-Mandalam of the Pallavas, there were in Kanchi some hundreds of Sangharamas and 10,000 Theravadin priests. The famous Buddhist logician Dinnaga lived in Kanchi.

By the religious revival of Saivism and Vaishnavism in South India the Buddhist and the Jain influences gradually disappeared.



Ghats at Kasi

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Swadhyaya

Valmiki Ramayana

महदासीत्ततस्तेषां तुल्यं स्थानमवाप्य तत् ।
आकाशयुद्धं तुमुलं देवदानवयोरिव ।।

mahadaaseettatasteshaam tulyam sthaanamavaapyatat
aakaashayuddham tumulam devadaanavayoriva

When both the parties (Ravana and sons of Varuna) had equal positions (in the sky), there took place a great and deadly war between them, reminding one of the famous war of gods and demons.

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ततस्ते रावणं युद्धे शरैः पावकसंनिभैः ।
विमुखी[illegible] संहृष्टा विनेदुर्विविधान् रवान् ।।

[illegible]taste [illegible]uddhe sharaih paavakasamnibhaih
vimukhi[illegible]mhrishtaa vinedurvividhaan ravaan

Then they attacked [illegible] Ravana with arrows resembling flames, and drove him [illegible] battle for sometime. By this act, they [illegible] very much pleased and they shouted very loudly.

ततो महोदरः क्रुद्धो राजानं दृश्य धर्षितम् ।
त्यक्त्वा मृत्युभयं वीरो युद्धकांक्षी व्यलोकयत् ।।

tato mahodarah kruddho rajaanam drishya drishya
tyaktvaa mrityubhayam veero yuddhakaamkshee vyalokayat

Thereafter Mahodara, the angry hero, desirous of fight, saw that his King (Ravana) was troubled. Then he came forward, leaving aside the fear of death.

तेन तेषां हया ये च कामगाः पवनोपमाः ।
महोदरेण गदया हतास्ते प्रययुः क्षितिम् ।।

tena teshaam hayaa ye cha kaamagaah pavanopamaah
mahodarena gadayaa hataaste prayayuh kshitim

Mahodara attacked, with his mace, upon their swiftly moving horses who ran as per the wish of their master and who were fleet as the wind. With this attack, the horses came to the ground.

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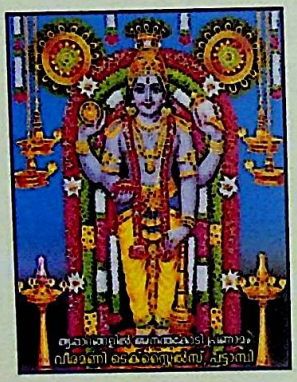

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Kashmir

Paradise on Earth

Shanti Mahalingam

If there be paradise on Earth - it is here, it is here, it is here

Kashmir is part of the state of Jammu & Kashmir – India's northernmost state. The Jawahar Tunnel separates Jammu from the Kashmir valley. While Jammu's main and perhaps, only attraction is Katra, where the cave temple of Vaishnodevi is located, Kashmir has the lion's share of breathtaking tourist spots. Stunning snow-clad mountains,

Shikaras

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lush green valleys, roaring river torrents – Kashmir lives up to its reputation as the one of the world's most beautiful travel destinations.

However, fifteen years of insurgency have taken a tragic toll, not only of lives but of the livelihood of its people. The tourist flow dried to a trickle during these years, plunging those who depended on it into penury. This is why the revival of tourism in recent years, has brought new life and enthusiasm among Kashmiris.

As one enters Srinagar, the summer capital, the vehicle passes through an amazing 'green tunnel' – almost unending ranks of tall, graceful poplar trees that line the road on either side! Srinagar is best known for Dal Lake which hugs the Boulevard, the main street. There are approximately 15,000 houseboats and an equal number of *shikaras* on the lake which resembles not so much a lake, as a small sea of freshwater! Floating hotels and shops selling traditional Kashmiri shawls, *salwar-kameez,* carpets and handicrafts, dot the lake.

Beautiful Kashmir

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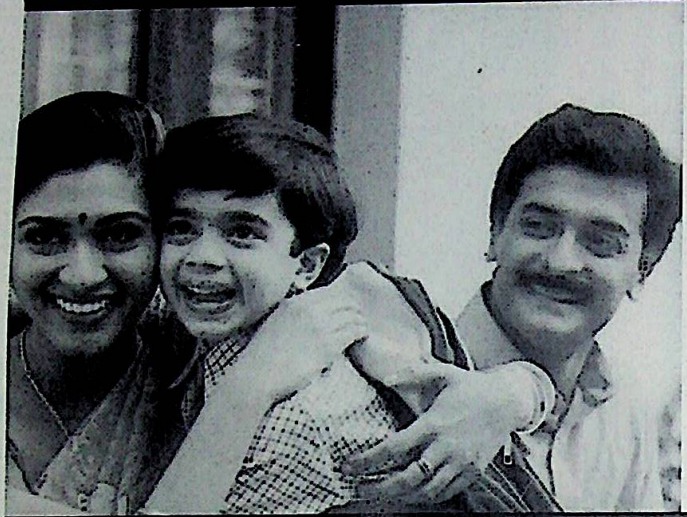
Hundred on Hundred
Trust



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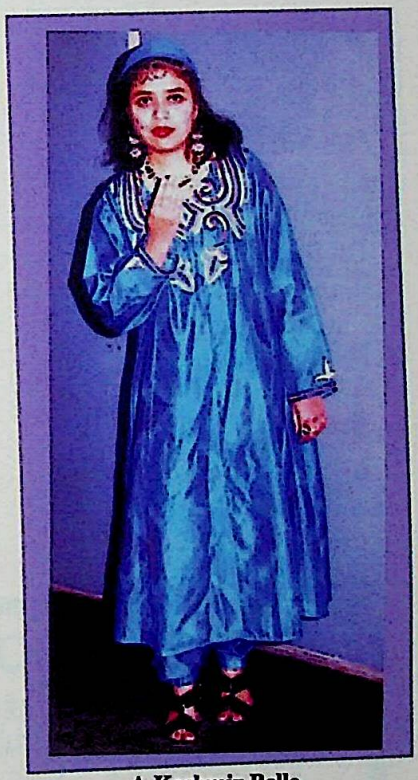
There are even floating gardens of matted weeds and mud on which the lake dwellers grow vegetables, flowers and fruits. Smooth talking salesmen in small boats draw up alongside the *shikaras* to ferry tourists from the houseboats to the Boulevard, entreating them to buy everything from 'kesar' to 'Bhumro' jewellery!

Want a snapshot of yourself dressed in traditional Kashmiri costume? No problem! You can go through the entire dressing up in minutes while gliding across the lake. The photographs are delivered at one's houseboat the next day.

Char Chinar is a tiny island in the lake which has four ancient chinar trees growing on it. Tourists can water-ski and take a motorboat ride from here. Both activities are nothing to write home about and in fact, ruin the serenity of the surroundings. The smell of exhaust from the boats convinces you that *shikaras* are the most ideal form of transport for the lake.

The Shankaracharya temple on the hill overlooking the lake is worth visiting for its stupendous view of the city and the lake. The Nishat, Shalimar and Chashmashahi gardens laid out by the Mughal emperors enchant with their vivid flower beds, soothing green lawns and a variety of trees including apple, cherry and willow. There are



A Kashmir Belle

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quaint stone arches and fountains set in gradually ascending terraces. The gardens attract hordes of picnickers and in summer are filled with giggling schoolchildren.

On the way to Sonamarg, a mountain resort, lies Hazratbal, the mosque enshrining the Prophet's hair. At Sonamarg, the first glimpse of snow-clad mountains in close-up is thrilling. The slopes can be reached on horseback but first one has to cover oneself in warm jackets, gloves and rubber boots. These are available for hire as are the sturdy ponies. The main activity here is sledging. The tourists ride up to the top of the slopes on horseback or are pulled up on the sledges. Then comes the hair-raising slide down the slope.

Gulmarg actually means 'the vale of flowers' because, in summer, it is carpeted with millions of tiny blue and pink flowers. It has the highest golf course in the world. It also has the highest ropeway (completed in May 2005). The cable car (called gondola) offers you a heartstopping ride from Gulmarg to Kongdori and then on to Apparwat's skiing slopes. The little yellow cars have transparent glass windows through which you can see the valley below and the snow-capped peaks above – both at the same time.

It is an unforgettable journey, one you cannot afford to miss.

Across the mountain is the Line of Control and a view of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

Of course, even in the middle of May one requires jackets and the warmth of heaters and hot water bags provided by the hotel at night.

On to Pahalgam, the 'village of shepherds', through which flows the foaming Lidder river. The weather here is deliciously cool, after the biting chill of Gulmarg. If you are adventurous, then rafting down the river is a must-do activity. Otherwise, go for an hour-long horse ride through the Aru valley or up to the snowy heights of

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Chandanwari. The Aru valley is traversed only by ponies which tread the rocky paths unerringly without missing a step. At some places the path narrows down to a hand's breadth!

If you haven't finished your shopping spree in Srinagar, you can complete it in Pahalgam. And don't forget to stock up on saffron, walnuts and other dry fruits at Qazigund on the way to Jammu. Kashmiri saffron costs upto 100 rupees for 2 grams but it is value for money.

And if your son loves cricket, bats made from Kashmiri willow are available at prices that will make you sing. A good bat costs around Rs.200 but prices start from Rs.60.

You might take away a bit of Kashmir with you, there is one thing you will definitely leave behind – and that is your heart. The moment you emerge from the Jawahar Tunnel into the heat of Jammu, you long to be back amidst the serene waters of Dal lake and the cool snows of Gulmarg.

As you cast a wistful look

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-: Mahatma Gandhi

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behind, Emperor Jahangir's words spring into the mind: 'If there be a paradise on Earth - it is here, it is here, it is here'.

Places to visit

Srinagar : A tourist paradise (on earth) Srinagar and Kashmir is a showcase of nature's most splendid attractions – mountains, river, lakes, woods and meadows.

Gulmarg : meadow of flowers, is a charming hill resort. A lush green valley fringed by gigantic fir and pine forests. Gulmarg is renowned for its luxuriant golf courses, the highest in the world.

Pahalgam : unspoilt beauty of the landscape and the dancing snow-fed streams that abound in Pahalgam are unique. Ideally situated at the confluence of Lidder and Seshnag rivers and placed in the bosom of pine and fir covered thick mountains.

It is a base for pilgrimage to the sacred cave of Amarnath; Places of Interest – Anantnag, Kolahoi glacier, Seshnag.

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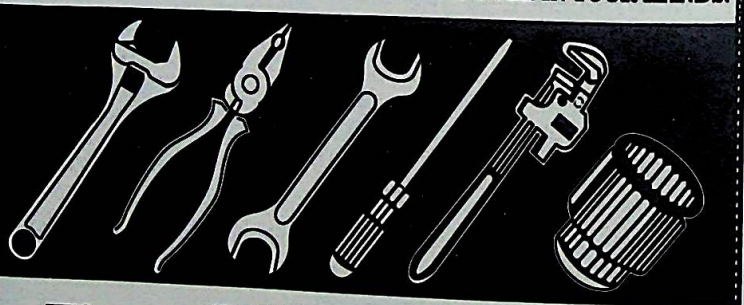

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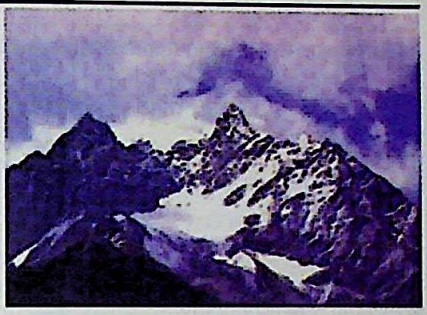

Fascinating Himalayas

It is not only the abode of snow but also the abode of Hindu gods and goddessess and the Kailash vasis

The magnificent range of the Himalaya mountain in the north of India has been specifically referred to in the Rigveda (1-121-4) as follows: "To which other Deity shall we offer our prayers? On account of Your prowess, Mountains like the Himalayas and the oceans with rivers are created and the distant quarters are designated as your mere arms."

Kalidasa in his Kumarasambhava has described the Himalaya as the King of mountains, the abode of gods and the measuring rod of the earth. It is called the dear calf of the mother cow, the earth. It is a store-house of endless gems and precious herbs; it is perpetually pure with eternal snow.

Indian poets have sung passionately of the Himalaya. It is considered the abode of the Siddhas, the Yakshas and the Sadhus. Kalidasa aptly says that female Yaks spread out and wave their beautiful white tails at this Giriraja or the King of mountains and prove its title of a sovereign as if by the waving of the *chamaris*.

The best known sages of India have had their ashramas in the Himalaya region and poet Bharavi compares the Himalaya with the Veda itself inasmuch as "true and liberating knowledge has emanated from the region of the Himalaya as from the Srutis; it has dispelled darkness and

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acted for the benefit of those who seek the highest and the pure state of Brahma, which is devoid of deaths and old age."

Geologists have divided India into three main parts. One is the plateau of the Deccan, south of the Vindhyas. The second is the Himalaya mountain range in the north of India and also spreading over Afghanistan, Baluchistan and Burma—it is known as the Extra Peninsula. The third is the Indo-Gangetic plain of the Punjab and Bengal.

Himalaya range of mountains is stupendously large and contains some of the highest peaks in the world. It is believed that the chain of the Himalaya mountain was formed on account of the very strong lateral thrust of the earth coming from the northern or the Tibetan direction towards the southern Peninsula of India.

It is further believed that the various curvatures in the formation of the Himalaya can be explained by the resistance offered by the region of the Peninsula to these thrust-waves coming from the north and that in addition to the resistance of this southern peninsula, the two mountain ranges of the Aravalli mountains and the Assam mountains have helped to strengthen this resistance.

On account of this resistance, the Himalayas have a steep and abrupt border when they face the plains of India while the slope in the opposite direction towards Tibet is much more gentle.

But the Himalayas are not a single chain of mountains but a series of several parallel ranges with an intersection of enormous valleys and spacious plateaus. The entire width of these mountain ranges varies from 100 to 250 miles. The central range of these parallel ranges is known as the Great Himalayan range and is about 1,500 miles long. The Himalayas are connected with the Hindukush, the Karakoram, the Kuen Lun, the Tien Shan, the Trans-Alai ranges and the Pamirs.

But it is now generally taken that the name Himalaya should apply to that range of mountains

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HE WORKS BEST WHO WORKS WITHOUT ANY MOTIVE, NEITHER FOR MONEY, NOR FOR FAME, NOR FOR ANYTHING ELSE; AND WHEN A MAN CAN DO THAT, HE WILL BE A BUDDHA, AND OUT OF HIM WILL COME THE POWER TO WORK IN SUCH A MANNER AS WILL TRANSFORM THE WORLD.

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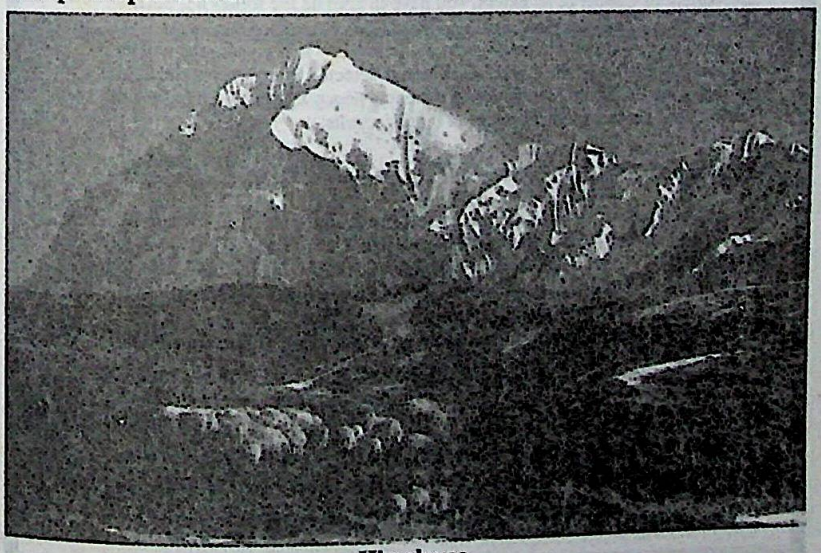
which terminates in the North-West at the great bend of the Indus river in the Kashmir and which has its southeastern limit defined by a similar bend of river Brahmaputra in the upper Assam.

Scholars have opined that the Himalayan range goes even beyond the Indus and the Brahmaputra. It is equally true that at these two points in Kashmir and Assam, the strike of the mountains and the geological formations take a sharp hairpin bend.

As the very name shows, the Himalaya is the abode of frost or snow. It was known as Imaus or Himaus or Hemodas. Greeks called it the Indian Caucasus. The Himalayas spread out from Kashmir to Assam for about 20 degrees of longitude. The highest peak in Kashmir is the Nanga Parbat (26,620 feet). The prominent peak in Assam is Namcha Barwa (25,445 feet). This long range of mountains from north-west to south-east is conveniently divided into four sections.



Himalayas

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The first section is the Punjab Himalayas from the Indus to the Sutlej 350 miles long; the second section is the Kumaon Himalayas from the Sutlej to the Kali 200 miles long; the third section is the Nepal Himalayas from the Kali to the Tista about 500 miles long; and the fourth section is the Assam Himalayas from the Tista to the Brahmaputra, 450 miles long.

This kind of division refers to the East to West sections of this stupendous mountain range. But the Himalayan system is also classified in longitudinal rows of three parallel ranges from west to east.

The first is the great Himalaya. It is the innermost range and also the highest. It has perpetual snow. Its average height is about 20,000 feet, and some of the highest peaks are situated in this range. They are Mount Everest (29,002 feet) in the Nepal Himalayas; K2 (28, 250 feet) in the Karakoram; Kanchenjunga (28,146 feet) in the Nepal Himalaya; Dhaulagiri (26,795 feet) in the Nepal

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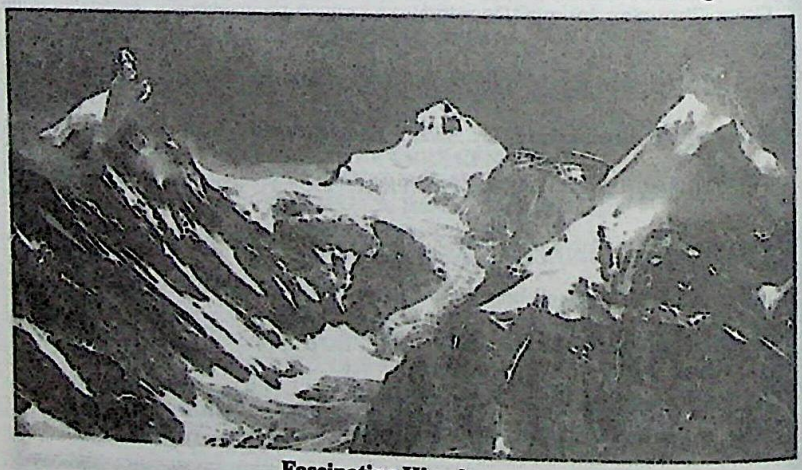
Himalaya; Nangaparbat (26,620 feet) in the Kashmir Himalaya; Gasherbrum (26,470 feet) in the Karakoram; Gosainthan (26,291 feet) in the Nepal Himalaya and Nandadevi (26,695 feet) in the Kumaon Himalaya.

The second range is known as the lesser Himalayas or the middle range, situated in the south of the great Himalaya range. This range of lesser Himalaya has a height of about 12,000 to 15,000 feet and is about 15 miles wide.

The third range of mountains which intervenes between the lesser Himalayas and the Indo-Gangetic plain is known as outer Himalayas or the Siwalik range. Its height is about three to four thousand feet and its width is from 5 to 30 miles.

A variety of scenery is noticeable on these great ranges. Shadowy valleys, successive forests, ridges, snowy pinnacles, deep precipices, luxuriant vegetation, magnificent glaciers, wonderful desolation at higher elevations, greatly venerated mountain peaks which are places of pilgrimage, the eternal flow of sacred rivers and lavish scenes of majestic nature—all these combine to rouse the imagination



Fascinating Himalayas

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and a feeling of veneration.

All the rivers of the Punjab rise in the Himalayas. The Yamuna, the Ganga, the Kali and the Goghra rise in the next section of the Himalayas. The Gandak and the Kosi with seven affluents rise in the Nepal Himalayas. The Brahmaputra is the chief river in the Assam Himalayas.

Siva -Parvati

The Tibetan Zone lies beyond the line of the highest elevation of the great Himalayas. Geologically, it is composed of a continuous series of highly fossiliferous marine sedimentary rocks. South of the Tibetan zone is the Himalayan Zone which consists of the great Himalaya and the middle Himalayas. Geologically, it is mostly composed of crystalline and metamorphic rocks with unfossiliferous sedimentary deposits of an early age. The third is the sub-Himalayan range of the Siwalisk and geologically, it is composed of Tertiary and sedimentary river deposits.

It is believed that the Himalayas stood out from very early times but the main folding

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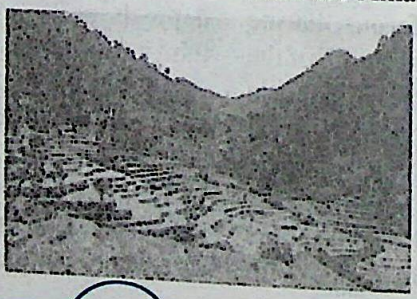
took place in the Tertiary era. The Siwaliks are also divided into three stages. The beds of the waterless forest lands are called the Bhavar or the Ushara Bhumi. Though there is little of water, there are magnificent forests. This is so particularly at the foot of the Kumaon Hills. To the south of the Bhavar the country changes into a swamp which is devoid of trees but has sluggish streams and this tract is known as the Tarai.

In the Tarai, the ground is marshy. Between the Siwaliks and the Himalaya, the valleys are known as Duns. The most remarkable and the best known is the Dehra Dun from the town of Dehra. The Hill stations of Dharamsala, Simla, Chakrata, Mussoorie, Dalhousie, Naini Tal and Ranikhet are well known.

In the Himalayan region while crossing the great rivers, local suspension bridges of cane and other fibres are usually made use of. There are several paths which are well frequented. Badrinath and Kedarnath are annually frequented by numerous pilgrims.



Similarly pilgrims also visit Jamunotri, Gangotri, the Kailasa and the Mansarovar. Sheep and yaks are used as beasts of burden. For going to the Kailas and the Mansarovar, one has to enter the region of Tibet. There are many passes.

The Kailas is venerated both by the Buddhists and the Hindus. It is regarded by the Hindus as the Sivalinga itself.

In the Himalayan range of mountains in the North stretching out from Kashmir to Assam, are located a number of places of pilgrimage, the most famous of them are Amarnath in Kashmir; Mansarovar and Kailasa in Tibet; and Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath and Badarinath. Pilgrims coming to Kailasa from

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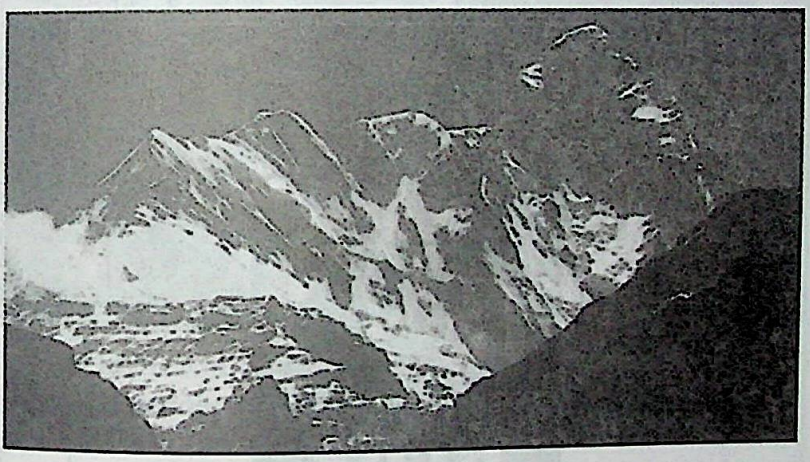
the other two routes first arrive at Landifu and then start their perambulation, the *parikrama* of Kailasa is about 32 miles. Most of the pilgrims move round Kailasa walking.

Some few devout pilgrims also have the *pradakshina* while performing the *sashtanga dandavat pranama*. In the Tibetan language there is a *purana* on Kailasa or Kangrimpoche called "Kangri Karchhak".

The presiding deity of Kailasa according to it is "Democahog" and His Divine Consort is "Dorje-Fangmo." The male deity has the matted hair, three eyes and holds the *Damaru* and the *Trisula*. These deities very much resemble Siva and Parvati. According to Jains, Mount Kailasa is the Ashtapada Mountain where the first Jain Tirthankra Adinath Rishthadeva had his *nirvana*.



There is a belief that those who cannot make the perambulation of Kailasa on account of physical inability may have it done through a substitute like the sheep, the horse, etc. The beauty of Kailasa has been sung by numerous poets, including Kalidasa. The devout after their death are stated to have become "Kailasa-vasins."

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Pilgrims who usually have the *yatra* of Kedarnath and Badarinath first go to Yamunottari and then to Gangotri. From Hardwar they come to Deva Prayag. Then they proceed to Tihari and Dharasu and reach Yamunotari.

This place is about 10,000 ft. above the sea level. River Yamuna starts from the Kalinga mountain and it is considered as its source. The water of Yamuna is very cold but nearby there are *kundas* of hot water. The water there is so hot that pilgrims can cook their food in this water. For taking a bath they have to mix hot and cold waters from these two different sources. River Yamuna is stated to be the daughter of the Sun God and the sister of Yama. River Tapi is also stated to be another daughter of the Sun God.

From Yamunottari pilgrims proceed to Gangotri, the legendary source of River Ganga. For that they first come to Uttar Kashi, where there are numerous old temples. Gangotri is about 10,000 ft. above the sea level. Gomukh or the mouth of the Cow from which River

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Ganga issues is about 18 miles away from Gangotri. At Gangotri there are images of Ganga, Bhagiratha and Sankaracharya. From Gangotri and Yamunottari, pilgrims collect waters for their further pilgrimage to Kedarnath which they pour on God Siva at Kedar.

Ten miles from Kathmandu is the famous temple of Changu Naryana. The main gate of this temple is considered to be one of the best pieces of art. About 140 miles from Kathmandu is situated Muktinath, which is also called Salagrama Kshetra. Muktinath is near the Gandaki river and this river is famous for Salagrama stones from which images of Vishnu in His various incarnations are prepared. River Gandaki is also known as river Narayani or river Salagrami. Muktinath is also one of the 51 Sakti Peeths. About 16 miles from Muktinath is the Damodara Kunda which is considered to be the source of river Gandaki. Devout pilgrims take Salagrama stones of various sizes and establish them in the routine of their daily worship.

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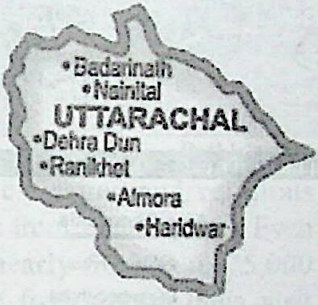
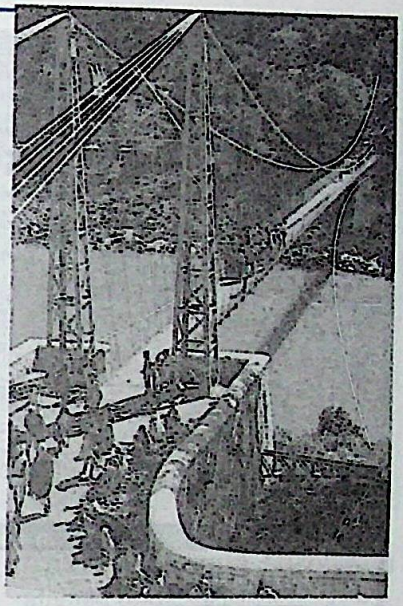
To Badrinath

R. Sahai





Lakshmana-Jhoola at Hrishikesh spanning the Ganges.

Badrinath has been the number one choice of pilgrimage places from times immemorial

Among all the most sacred places mentioned in the ancient books of the Hindus, four stand out on account of their extraordinary religious significance. These holy places known as Dhams are:

(1)Jagannath Puri, on the east coast;

(2) Rameshwaram, an island in the extreme south;

(3)Dwarka, on the west coast; and

(4)Badrinath in the north, situated amongst the Himalayas, at a height of 10,300 ft above sea-level.

Badrinath, the supreme place of pilgrimage, has been attracting

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Bathing ghats at river Ganga

ascetics, sages and religious people from ancient times. Even now nearly 50,000 to 75,000 people, from all over India, visit it annually. It is the one place which every Hindu hopes to visit in his life time.

Badrinath is about 176 miles from Rishikesh Railway Station, from Hardwar, a station on the Lhaksar-Dehra Dun branch of the Northern Railway. From Rishikesh one has to go by bus to Kirtinagar, cross a narrow suspension bridge over the Alaknanda on foot, catch a bus at the other end of the bridge for Chamoli, 64 miles away. Badrinath is about 48 miles from Chamoli, along a fairly well aligned bridle-path.

Badrinath remains covered with snow from November to April so the route is open only from May to October, although, during the monsoon (middle of July to middle of September) landslides are likely to occur which might make the path temporarily impassable. The main pilgrim season is from the middle of May to the middle of June, though some prefer to go from mid-September to mid-October, when the season is very pleasant. The route is clean and there are very few pilgrims and flies, the main scourge during the

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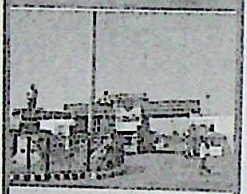

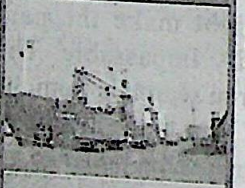

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summer months, are completely absent.

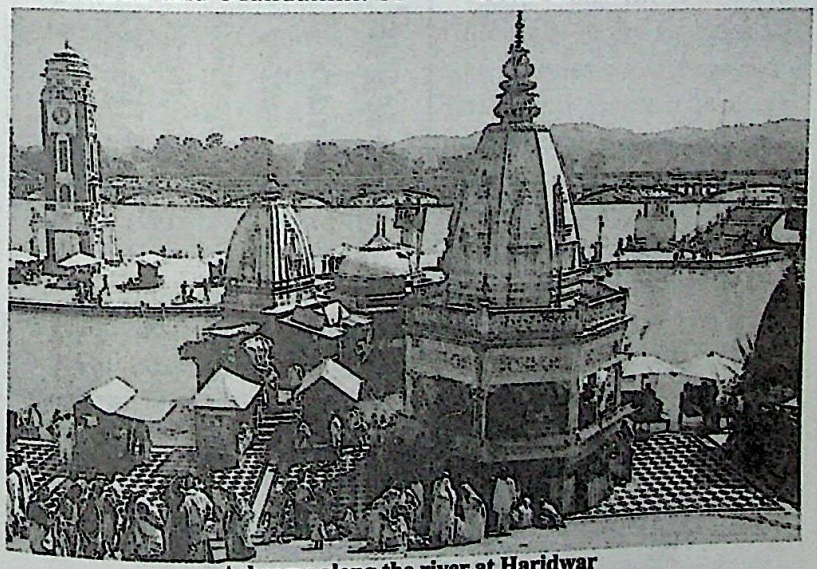
On the motor road from Rishikesh to Kirtinagar, is the picturesque town of Deva Prayag situated at the confluence of the Bhagirathi and the Alaknanda.Deva Prayag is an important place of pilgrimage. Beyond the confluence of these two streams, the river is known as the Ganga.

On the motor road to Chamoli is the town of Rudraprayag, situated at the confluence of the Alaknanda and Mandakini. A bridle-path branches off along the Mandakini to the famous shrine of Kedarnath (13,000 feet high), which is a place of extraordinary grandeur.

A majestic temple, sacred to Shiva stands solitary, sheer against a dazzling wall of snow, up which is the legendary Maha Pantha-the path taken by the five Pandavas on their last journey.

Continuing on the motor road from Rudraprayag along the Alaknanda is Karanprayag, and beyond this is Nandprayag.

From Chamoli the trek starts.



Ashrams along the river at Haridwar

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The Badrinath range

The bridle-path follows the valley of the Alaknanda. The hill-sides are generally steep and bare with small patches of *chir and ban* forests here and there .

Joshimath is an important town and has many temples. At Joshimath is an image of Narsingh, with one hand exceedingly thin. Legend has it, that when *Ghor Kaliyug* sets in, this hand shall break, and the route to Badrinath will be rendered quite impassable by natural disasters. When the temple at Badrinath becomes snowbound, the priest moves down for 6 months to Joshimath.

From Joshimath the bridle-path descends continuously for about 2 miles to Vishnuprayag where the Dhauli river joins the Alaknanda.

The way from Vishnuprayag to Pandukeshwar is very stony and rocky with frequent ascents and descents, although the scenery is rather picturesque. It was in the temple here that were found the famous Pandukeshwar copper plates of great archaeological value, but whose whereabouts are unknown.

From Pandukeshwar the bridle-path is fairly even for about 7 miles up to Hanuman Chatti and passes through forests. From Hanuman Chatti one begins to feel the effects of the altitude, starts the steepest climb of the trek, for about 2 miles up to Devadarshani. From this spot one gets the first glimpse of Badrinath, a mile away and thereafter the path again becomes gentle.

The town of Badrinath is situated on the right bank of the Alaknanda river. Here is the famous temple of Shri Badrinath.

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In the compound of the temple there is a hot water spring which leads to a masonry reservoir (called Taptkund) which provides pilgrims with a hot bath and hot water for ordinary use.The temple has been recently electrified. Unfortunately, all vegetation within a radius of about 3 miles of the town of Badrinath has been almost completely destroyed. All the hill-tops around Badrinath look bleak and bare. Erosion is common and there are frequent avalanches. Even in early 1952 a huge avalanche destroyed buildings in a part of the town. Consequently the most urgent need of the town is afforestation of the surrounding barren and treeless wastelands.

An enterprising business man has succeeded in growing vegetable and fruit on the left bank of the Alaknanda river, opposite the town of Badrinath, showing that the soil is quite suitable for the growth of trees.

About a mile beyond Badrinath the valley becomes fairly broad near Mana village, and here can be developed a landing-ground for small aeroplanes.

Five miles from Badrinath is Vasudhara where there is a very big waterfall. Further up, the Aklaknanda river becomes a mere trickle and its glacial formation can be seen.

All along the valley of the Alaknanda there are a number of brooks, rivulets and small springs. There are also some picturesque waterfalls and occasionally one gets a glimpse of the snow. The bridle-path is far above the level of the Alaknanda river which is, therefore, generally not visible except from Vishnuprayag and beyond. Here the bed of the river is full of boulders.Above Hanuman Chatti the bed of the Alaknanda river is rather steep and looks more like the steep bed of a glacier and not the well-carved out bed of an old river.

As the valleys are quite warm during May and June it is advisable to make a move early in the morning, say at 6 a.m. Beyond Joshimath, the altitude acts as a foil to the heat.

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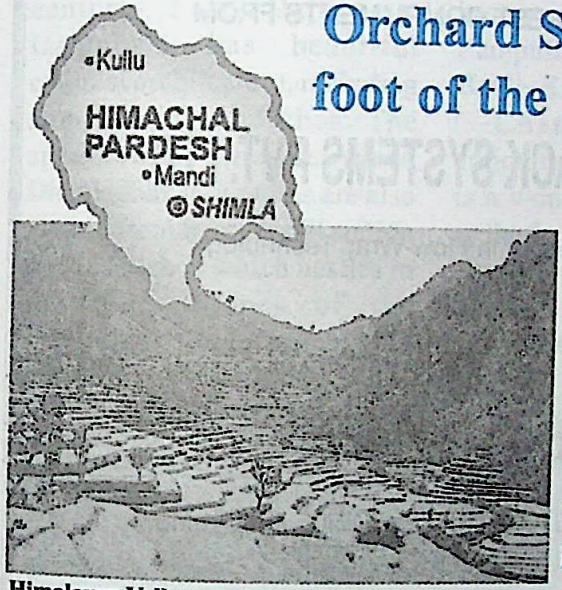
Himachal Pradesh

Orchard State at the foot of the Himalayas



Himalayan Valley

Winding roads and high passes that link its high mountains with valleys are its high points.

Nestling in the Himalayas, Himachal Pradesh is a mountain state which is a delight for visitors, particularly during the summer when people come here to escape the scorching heat of the plains. Winding roads and high passes that link its high mountains with valleys are its high points.. While the picturesque valleys of Kullu and Kangra are a blend of colors, Lahaul and Spiti are barren places. Before Independence, Shimla was the most important British hill station, and in summer it was its summer capital where Britishers went with their bag and baggage.

The British in 1819 A.D discovered Shimla whose name is derived from the Himalayan Goddess Shamla, a synonym of

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Kali. **Dalhousie**, an important town is named after the British Governor – General of the 19th century, Lord Dalhousie. Dalhousie has beautiful colonial architecture, including some lovely churches. The spectacular snow-covered Dhauladhar Mountains are also visible from here. A hill station par excellence which nestles in the outer slopes of the Dauladhar range among the scented and stately oak and pine trees. It is the gateway of Chamba, the valley of milk and honey: Places of Interest – Punjpulla, Salt Dhara, Subhash Baoli, Khajjiar, Chamba.

Chamba, the land of antiquity, art and scenic beauty, is a wonder in itself. Situated at the height of 996 m. above sea level on the south bank of the Ravi river, it was founded in 920 A.D. by Raja Sahil

The Kullu Valley : In the heart of Himachal Pradesh lies the enchanting valley of Kulu. Known as the Valley of the Gods. It is literally a valley of 100 temples – a thousand deities. Excellent for long walks and treks in flower covered valleys and through pine and cedar forests. **Kullu** was once known as Kulanthpitha, which means the end of the habitable world.

Manali at 1829 metres, enjoys a charming location. It offers a surprising diversity of holidays, ranging from the lethargic to the invigorating.1 Manali is the Northern end of the Kullu Valley and is the main resort in the area. Surrounded by towering peaks, Manali's major asset is its nearness to the snowline, never more than a few hours drive. It is the center of the flourishing orchard industry, a popular honeymoon destination and trailhead for numerous treks.Manali is the chief tourist centre. Fruit farming is a major industry. Apples, Pears, Cherries, Apricots, Plums and Peaches are grown. Places of Interest – Dhoongri temple, Bhrigu lake, Solang valley of Kolhi, a lovely village.

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Verma, who named it after his daughter Champavati.

Chamba valley is noted for the magnificence of it's scenery-touching the fringe of the Shivaliks and having three well-defined snowy ranges, the Dauladhar, constituting the outer Himalayas, the Pir Panjal or the mid Himalayas, and the Zanskar range or the inner Himalayas.

Set against the backdrop of the dramatic Dhauladhar Mountains, **Dharamshala** is perched on the high slopes in the upper reaches of Kangra Valley. Dharamshala is also the home of Dalai Lama, spiritual head of Buddhists. Dharamshala stands spur of the Dhauladhar range amidst magnificent deodar and pine forests, tea gardens and beautiful hills. It is also known as 'The Lhasa of India'. Little Lhasa is an enchanting world where spinning prayer wheels and fluttering prayer flags spread the message of peace and universal harmony.

Beyond rose the forbidding heights of the Greater Himalayas, and by the banks of

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the shining river Beas, lay the fabled 'Silver Valley' which has lovely flowers on the high meadows. The Valley of Gods, as the Kullu Valley has come to be known, is perhaps the most delightful region in the Western Himalayas.

Situated on the banks of the river Beas, Kullu, the headquarters of the district, serves as a nerve centre of the valley and is the starting place for a number of treks.

Manikaran Hot Springs – 45 kms from Kulu: Hot springs containing sulphur. A temple and gurudwara attract a large number of pilgrims. Food cooked in the springs is served as Prasad.

Shimla One of the finest hill stations; Places of Interest – Summer Hill, Chadwick Falls, Solan, Kasauli, Chail, Chabba, Mashobra, Naina Devi.

Solan – Simla : A popular spot to spend longer spells in the hills. Famous due to Mohan Meak in Breweries; Places of Interest – Karol Tibba, Mateol Tibba, Nahan (88 km).

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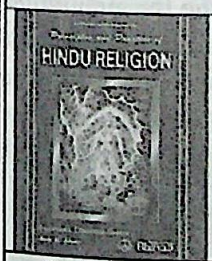

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Manali trek: A First hand Experience

Vidu Chandan

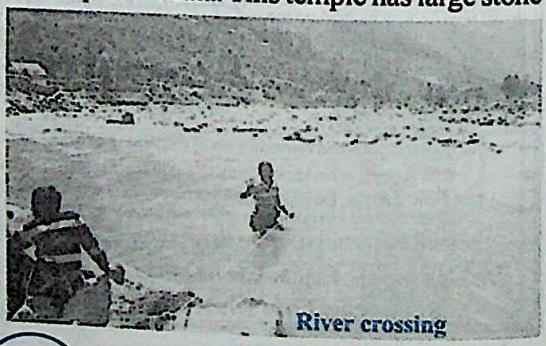
Trekking is quite a different experience from touring. In tour one usually stays in hotels and travels by vehicle. In trek one is on foot and stays in tents throughout. By this one is able to get the feel of the place better. One can interact with locals, trek through the villages and also feel like part of the place rather than be a traveler.

It took us three days of trekking toreach our destination. I was really luckily to have my tent at a perfect location. Every time I opened the tent's zip I could see the spectacular snow mountains.

The Beas River runs through entire Manali. I could hear the sound of the ice-cold water during my entire trip. Even at night inside my tent, I would go off to sleep listening to the sweet sound of the flowing water.

The temples there are quite simple, made of wood and stones unlike the temples elsewhere which are adorned with all kinds of precious metals and stones. The temples also have a Tibetan touch to it. Some of them are painted with vibrant colours.

I visited the Manu temple of a legendary sage through which Manali got its name. Then the Hidimba temple of Hidimba Mata. This temple has large stone



River crossing

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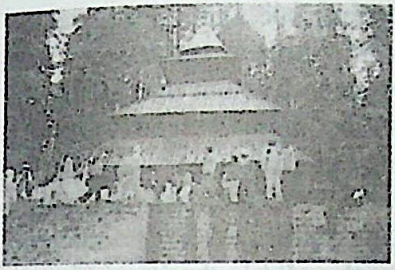

Tibetan temple

feet of Hidimba Mata which is around 5000 years old. I also visited Vaishist – where I saw the Rama & Shiva temple.

On the last day I went to a Tibetan temple which was close to the market. I wanted have a feel of a different culture. The magnificent statue of Buddha was worth compromising on the shopping time. There were also some colourful dragons on the both the sides of Buddha which could be an inspiration to a person even with no knowledge of arts.

I enjoyed three treks the most. One was to Jogini falls. This was a bit difficult due to the tough terrain and constant breathlessness. But the whole path was splendid with beautiful tiny flowers on the way —— white, lavender and yellow. Sometimes all of them would appear together and then yellow flowers would stand out like bright sunshine. This trek also claimed some discipline. The paths were so narrow, rocky and sometimes slippery that it demanded hundred percent attention and focus.

But then when there was enough space to ground my feet, I could look around and enjoy. I wished I had wings to fly over the glorious snow mountains and dive down the enormous gorge. The destination waterfall was magnificent but unsafe.

The other trek I enjoyed was to Solang valley. It was an 8 km trek. Pretty long but wonderful. We trekked through small roads, villages, streams, with large stones and who could forget the coniferous trees and the Snow Mountains? I could walk on this road forever. This was never ending and beautiful. I could forget all my tiredness soaking myself in the waters of Beas stream or looking around at the scenic beauty.

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The last trek, which I am very happy that I survived was at Snow point.

I also did some adventure activities like Rock Climbing, Repelling, Valley Crossing, River Crossing and Zummering. Out of these, Rock climbing and River crossing requires both physical strength and technique. Other activities could be done with ease once the technique is understood correctly.

While rock climbing I slipped and was suspended in the air midway. I survived due to the safety rope. I got my wrist, elbow and stomach scratched. There was no fear but disappointment of not doing it right. So, I did it again. This time it was a perfect climb but I lacked speed. During the River crossing I voluntarily took a dip in the icy cold water of the Beas River. It was breathtaking. (Pun intended)

The weather in Manali was constantly changing. It varied from rainy, windy, scorching heat to extreme cold. On one of the windy nights the entire tent was shaking - felt like one of the

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scenes from the English horror flicks. That night two tents were completely uprooted.

Another night the sky was completely clear with millions of starts. I stood on one of the rocks on our camp site, looked up and slowly moved myself in circular direction forming a 360 degree. I experienced an entire dome – just like the Nehru planetarium.

What I would miss the most of Manali is the lemon tea. In my life I haven't had tea like this so rich in taste and aroma. It contents simple ingredients - water, sugar, black pepper, tea leaves, mint leaves and lime. But the perfect quantity of each of these ingredients are the secrets of its rich feel. I would say just for tea it's worth the visit to Manali one more time.

Last day, it rained heavily. We were all drenched while we carried our heavy bags through the slipper roods towards the bus. But I wasn't sure what was heavier the heart or the bag. After unloading the bag on the bus the back felt light but the heart was still heavy. There was no means to unburden it.

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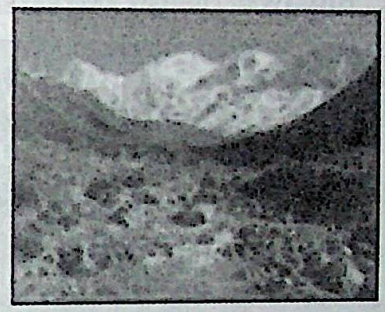
Sikkim

Climbing The Clouds



Sikkim

Sikkim is the second smallest state of India. With its pristine and unspoilt natural beauty and peace loving people, Sikkim offers a truly unique travelling experience. Sikkim, tucked away in India's North-East corner, between Tibet, Bhutan and Nepal is, without question, a very special part of India, beautiful, unspoilt, green, full of orchids, mountains, butterflies and monasteries, and home to the gentlest people you could wish to meet. Sikkim is situated in the eastern Himalayas.

Spread below the Mount Khanchendzonga (8534 mts), the third highest mountain in the world, and revered by the Sikkimese as their protective deity it has an area of 7,300 sq kms, the elevation ranges from 300 mts to over 8540 mts above sea level.

Amidst the grandeur of the mountain peaks, lush valleys, fast flowing rivers, hills, Sikkim offers her visitors a rare and singular experience. Within a matter of hours one can move from the sub tropical heat of the lower valleys to the

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cold of the rugged mountain slopes that reach up to the area of perpetual snow.

This hidden peaceful land of rice cultivation, called "Bayul Demojong" by the local people, is inhabited by Nepalis, Lepchas, Bhutias, Tibetans and Marwaris.

Sikkim has a variety of vegetation, including 4,000 rare species of plants. Its fascinating flora and fauna enchant nature lovers. In the wild gorges one finds ample opportunities for white-water rafting.

GANGTOK, the "Lofty Hill", is the capital of Sikkim. It is characterised by mysterious mists, fluttering prayer flags, painted roofs and pagoda-styled houses, a rich cultural heritage and friendly smiling people.

Steep slopes and storybook towns and temples that cling to craggy cliffs shrouded by mist makes Sikkim another of those mythical Shangri-la high in the Himalayas.

Sikkim has long been classified with all the other mythical Shangri-las in this heavenly region. Sikkim's steep slopes are striped with rice terraces, tea plantations or cardamom, the major crop.

Here, near the top of the world, visitors cannot help but feel special. Everest is visible just beyond Sikkim's own Mount Kanchendzonga, a circus tent of snow-capped peaks including the third highest in the world. In the clear, mountain air, Tibet seems so close you can smell the Yak butter tea. Bhutan is just miles away.

Sikkim may be the most vertical place on the planet. Landslides plague Sikkim's precarious roads, and that means slow going for traffic - when there is traffic.

For kilometers the countryside has shown no sign of habitation. In Sikkim, surprise is more common than speed. Likewise tradition, hospitality and ceremony, which seem to roam like free spirits along the fabled "rooftop of the world." .

For centuries, this ancient kingdom was locked up, an utter recluse. Even after joining India - its 25th anniversary was

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  Institute of Company Secretaries of India, December 2003
- Among Asia's Top Five in Energy Sector in Corporate Governance Poll
  Asiamoney, September 2003

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- No. 45 in the world 'CEOs – Companies that create the most value for their shareholders'
  PricewaterhouseCoopers survey, Financial Times, November 2004
- No. 1 in BT 500 'India's Most Valuable Companies'
  Business Today, November 2004
- Reliance Industries emerged 'India's Biggest Wealth Creator' in the private sector over a 5-year period
  Stern Stewart study, Business Today, April 2004

Environment

- Reliance Industries emerged as 'India's Greenest Company' amongst the private sector
  ACNielsen ORG-MARG survey, Business Today, October 2004

Management Quality

- No. 1 'Most Dynamic Organisation' in India
  IMRB International survey, Businessworld, November 2004
- Reliance is 'India's Best Managed Company'
  A.T. Kearney study, Business Today, June 2003
- No. 1 in India's 'Best Financial Management'
  FinanceAsia Poll, March 2003
- No. 2 in 'Overall Best Managed Company' of India
  Asiamoney, December 2003 - January 2004

Respect and Reputation

- Among the world's Top 10 'Most Respected Energy / Chemicals Companies' and No. 3 in 'India's Most Respected Companies'
  PricewaterhouseCoopers survey, Financial Times, November 2004
- No. 2 in 'India's Most Respected Companies'
  IMRB International survey, Businessworld, November 2004
- 'Most Admired Business House' and 'Most Admired Company'
  TNS Mode Opinion Poll, Business Barons, September 2004

Leadership

- No. 55 in the world 'CEOs – Companies that demonstrate the most innovation'
  PricewaterhouseCoopers survey, Financial Times, November 2004
- No. 2 as India's 'Most Globally Competitive Organisation'
  IMRB International survey, Businessworld, November 2004
- No. 2 in India in 'Overall Leadership', 'Financial Soundness', 'Long-Term Vision', 'Companies That Others Try To Emulate' and; Among Top Five in 'Innovative in Responding to Customer Needs'
  ACNielsen International Research, Far Eastern Economic Review (FEER) survey, Review 200: Asia's Leading Companies, December 2003

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- 'IT Excellence Award'
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Reliance Group, founded by Dhirubhai H. Ambani (1932-2002), is India's largest business house with total revenues of over Rs 99,000 crore (US$ 22.6 billion), cash profit of Rs 12,500 crore (US$ 2.8 billion), net profit of Rs 6,200 crore (US$ 1.4 billion) and exports of Rs 15,900 crore (US$ 3.6 billion). The Group's activities span exploration and production (E&P) of oil and gas, refining and marketing, petrochemicals (polyester, polymers, and intermediates), textiles, financial services and insurance, power, telecom and infocom initiatives.

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View from Sikkim

celebrated in May 1999, although statehood actually started in 1975 - Sikkim remained a prime target of travelers seeking the far corners of the planet. Sikkim is a poor-man's Bhutan, offering untrammeled forests to trek and lots of Tibetan temples. Accommodation is basic outside of the biggest towns, but a little money stretches a long way here.

Sikkim is quite a contrast from the rest of India. The climate can be chilly, but the people are friendly and the pace is relaxing. You'd be hard-pressed to find a square meter of level ground within Sikkim's entire 7,100 square kilometers., "From the air, it looks as though a giant plough had been carelessly run through it," writes Rajesh Verma, a local policeman who has produced perhaps the first guide to Sikkim. "Traveling on these roads gives you the feeling of riding on a horse that has gone berserk."

Gangtok stands at 1,700 meters, sprawling defiantly across a ridge overlooking a drop nearly as deep.

Gangtok means Lofty Hill, an apt moniker. Sights include Rhumtek Monastery (a replica of Chhofuk in Tibet) and the Namgyalk Institute of Tibetology, where the Dalai

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Lama laid the foundation stone in 1957. In spring, rhododendron color Sikkim's slopes, while its gardens are abloom with hundreds of varieties of orchids in spring and fall. Gangtok's market is equally colorful, showcasing the capital's population melting pot: tribal weavers, Indians with overflowing barrels of fragrant spice, Sikkimese tea and cardamom, and the sparkle of Nepalese silver spread on sarongs.

Sikkim has more than 250 monasteries. There no commercialization to tourism here. One can trek to mountaintop temples and stroll past prayer flags fluttering in the breeze to spend hours alone, enchanted by chanting and smell of incense.

At Labrang, like temples around Sikkim, there is no gate. There are also no ticket booths, tour buses, nor stands selling souvenirs. Inside Labrang temple, there isn't even an offering box. Thanks seems payment enough.

Massive migration from Nepal and Bengal has reduced

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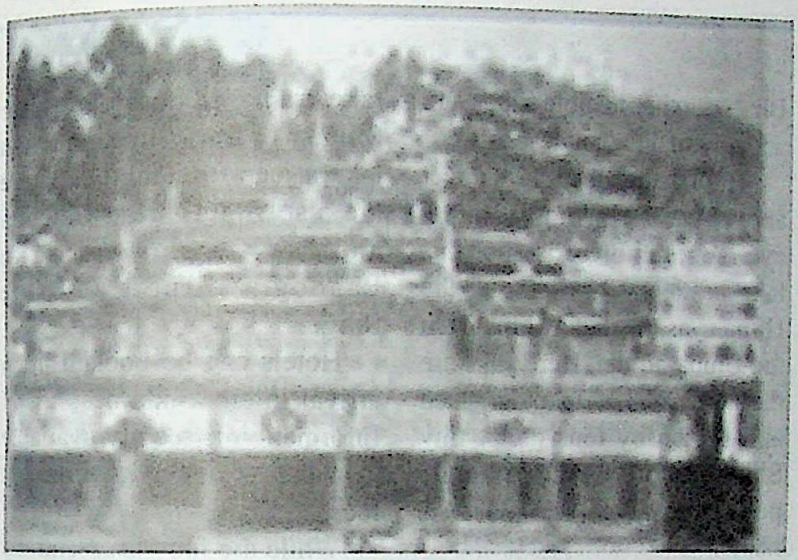

Rumtek Monastery

the native population, mainly Lepchas, to under 20 percent of Sikkim's population of 425,000 people. The Limbus and the

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Bhutias, other notable tribes, are actually of Tibetan descent.

The Tshangu lake, 12000 feet above sea level is a treat to the eyes. A beautiful tourist spot, this lake nestles in the arms of the Himalayas, just a few kms from the China border. Here yaks are the sturdy animals, photogrpahed and ridden by tourists. A tiny Shiva temple having a single pujari has given this place its name.

There are no airports or railroads in Sikkim, and only one road connecting the state to the rest of India. Most visitors take trains or buses to either Siliguri or Darjeeling, and then take a jeep to Gangtok. There are also flights from Calcutta and New Delhi direct to Bagdogra airport, outside Siliguri.

Hotels can be booked upon arrival in any Sikkimese town. Information is readily available in Gangtok at the government tourist office.

While the food is essentially the same as much of India, Sikkim also boasts the added delicacies of Tibetan, Nepalese and Bhutanese cuisine.

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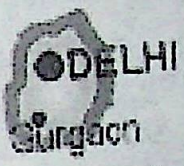
Delhi

Steeped in History

Vatsala Krishnakumar



Delhi, the capital of India, is generally never promoted as a tourist centre but a visit to Delhi at least once in a lifetime is a must.

While you are in Delhi you get a feeling of being surrounded by History. With the Red Fort, India Gate and Qutb Minar and the imposing Parliament House and Rashtrapati Bhavan and not to forget the resting places of Mahatma Gandhi, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi and others.

Delhi has various sightseeing places of interest to all. It houses many monuments which bear testimony of the past. Significant among these is the Red Fort from the ramparts of which every year our Prime Minister addresses the

QUTB MINAR

The Qutb Minar in Delhi is a beautiful monument. This tower, with its projecting balconies, which was constructed and reconstructed many times over was started by Qutb-ud-din Aibak in 1199, but he was unable to complete it and the task was then taken over by his successors. Composed of unique permeable iron it lies rust free till date. Example of early Afghan architecture.

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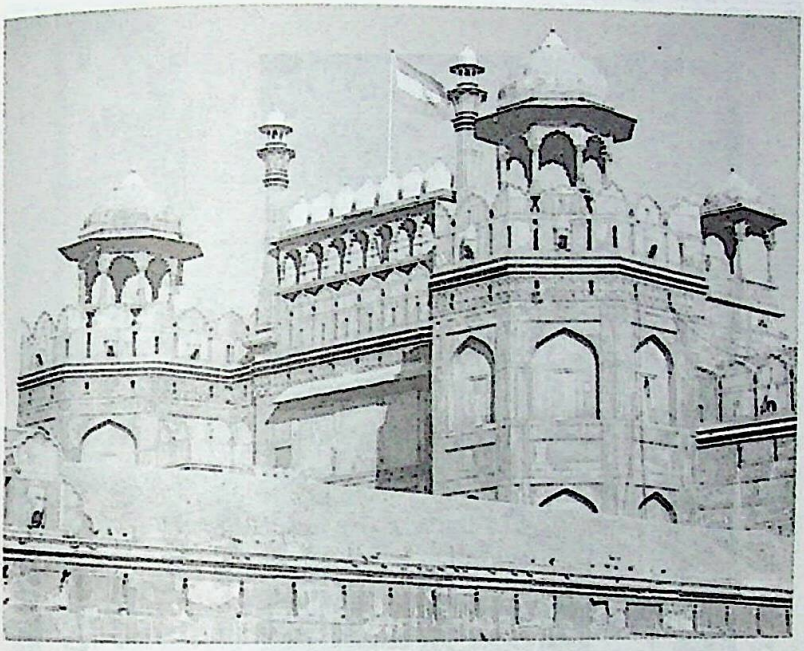

LAL QUILA

nation on the Independence Day. The Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan built the Red Fort when he shifted his base from Agra to Delhi. Another contribution to Delhi from Shah Jahan is the Jama Masjid, the largest and one of the oldest mosques in Delhi.

Delhi bore witness to various dynasties all of whom left their trace in the landscape of Delhi. The British left their impact in the form of India Gate, the Parliament House, Rashtrapati Bhavan and other commercial buildings. The imposing arch of the India Gate is in honour of the Indian soldiers who lost their lives in the First World War, the Afghan War of 1919 and the Amar Jawan Jyoti burns day and night to remind the nation of the soldiers who laid down their lives in the Indo-Pakistan War.

The Parliament House or the Sansad Bhavan which has seen many parties coming into power is a huge structure housing the chambers of the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha and the library. A

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verandah with 144 columns surrounds the three chambers giving it a distinct appearance.

The Connaught place also built during the British times is designed in concentric circles at the centre of which is the famous underground shopping centre Palika Bazaar. Also within the Connaught Place area is the Jantar Mantar Observatory built in 1724 by Maharaja Jai Singh.

Children will surely enjoy a visit to the Rail Museum which traces the history of Indian Railways. Here one can enjoy a ride in a Mono rail or even in a toy train and see exotic engines right from the inception of railways. Children can also have fun running some battery operated trains on their own.

The Baha'i temple in Delhi is a monument par excellence. This lotus-shaped symbol of peace is visited by people of all faith and religion. The Baha'i faith lays stress on prayer and meditation and believes in one God, the creator of the Universe and so this temple has no deity.

Places to Visit

Rashtrapathi Bhavan: The official residence of the President of India, built on Raisina Hill it covers 330 acres and dominates the city. Completed in 1929, it

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was originally the residence of the Viceroys of India. It has 360 rooms and an excellent 10-acre Mughal Gardens.

Red Fort: The Red Fort (Lal Qila), was built by the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan. So called because of its red sandstone walls. Construction began in 1638 and completed in 1648. Shah Jahan wanted to shift the Mughal Capital from Agra to Delhi and he had designed the Red Fort as his palace. But he was never able to completely shift the capital because his son Aurangzeb deposed him and imprisoned him in Agra Fort. Has the Diwan-i-Am (Hall of public audience) and Diwan-i-Khas (Hall of private audience). The Diwan-i-Khas was of silver. Here once was the golden Peacock Throne estimated at the time to be worth 12M pounds sterling. On the walks of the hall there is a Persian couplet in letters of gold. "If there is a paradise on earth it is this!"

Chanakya Puri: Most embassies are located here. A very beautiful and well laid out area.

Sansad Bhavan (Parliament House) : This circular colonnaded building 171m in diameter houses the Indian Parliament. Built on 3 levels, it has a red sandstone foundation storey, a buff-coloured storey with 144 pillars and a small attic storey. Specially imported acoustic tiles were used in the walls and sound-absorbing plaster on the ceiling; Places of Interest – India Gate, Purana Qila, Jantar Mantar, Firoz Shah Kotla, Hauz Khas, Tughlaqabad, Lodi's Tomb. Safdarjung's Tomb, Humayun's Tomb and Chandni Chowk.

Nehru Memorial: The residence of India's first Prime Minister is now a museum devoted to his life and career. Filled with photographs and other interesting memorabilia.

Son-et-Lumiere : A sound & light show depicting events of Indian history, particularly those connected with the Red Fort.

National Museum: Has a

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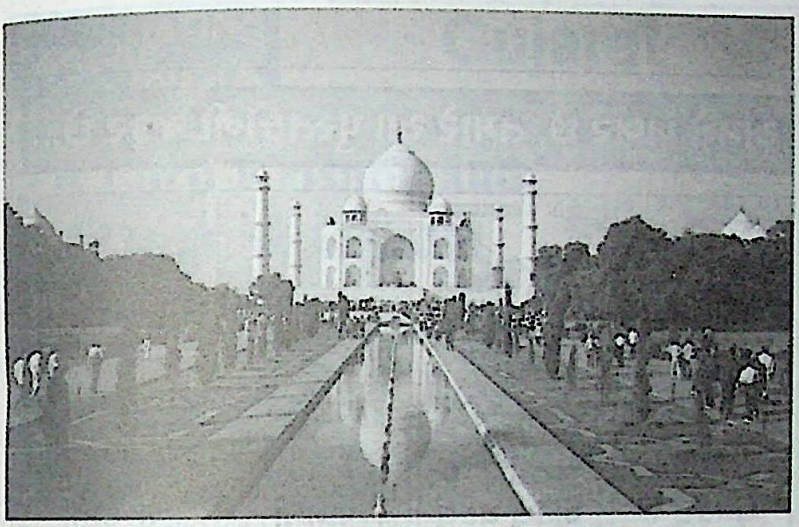

Face of India-the Beautiful Taj Mahal

good collection of Indian bronzes, terracotta and wood sculptures from the Mauryan period. The new wing houses a superb collection of over 300 classical, folk and tribal musical instruments.

The Iron Pillar : This seven-metre high pillar stands in the courtyard of the Quwwat-ul-Islam (the first mosque to be built in India) at the foot of the Qutab Minar. More than 2000 years old, it has not rusted. It is said that if you stand with your back to this iron pillar and your arms can encircle it then your wishes will come true.

A visit to Delhi is incomplete without a trip to Agra, the "city of love" as it houses one of the Wonders of the World- the **Taj Mahal.** No monument can ever surpass this beautiful monument built by Shah Jahan in memory of his beloved wife- Mumtaz Mahal. Built in white marble, its architectural beauty cannot be expressed in words! The bejewelled inlay work add to its charm. Thus the architectural splendour of Delhi has not diminished even in the modern times and is a source of marvel for people from world over.

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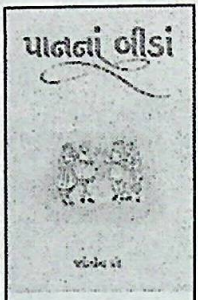
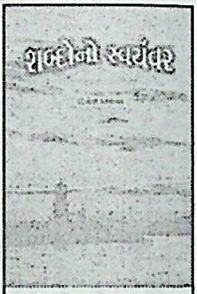
અમને ખબર છે, તમારે આ પુસ્તકોની જરૂર છે...

ધૂમકેતુનાં વાર્તારત્નો
ધૂમકેતુની
અનન્ય નવલિકાઓ
રૂ. ૮૦

અકલું-ચકલું બાળવાર્તાવલિ
રમણલાલ સોનીની
મોજભરી બાળકથાઓ
રૂ. ૧૨૫ (પુ. ૫)



પાનનાં બીડાં
જ્યોતીન્દ્ર દવેની
ખડખડાટ હાસ્યકથાઓ
રૂ. ૧૦૦



શબ્દોનો સ્વયંવર
દિનેશ પાંચાલના
માર્મિક કાન્તિકારી લેખો
રૂ. ૮૫

તાત્પર્ય
મોહમ્મદ માંકડના
તાજગીપ્રેરક લેખો
રૂ. ૧૦૦

ગૂર્જર
ગ્રંથરત્ન કાર્યાલય

રતનપોળનાકા પાસે,
ગાંધીમાર્ગ, અમદાવાદ-૧
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૨૨૧૪૯૬૬૦
ફેક્સ : ૨૨૧૪૪૬૬૩
ઈ-મેઈલ :
goorjar@yahoo.com

હેલ્થ-હાઈવે
ડૉ. મુકુંદ મહેતાના
આરોગ્યવિષયક ૧૬૨ લેખો
રૂ. ૨૭૦

આ ઉપરાંત કોઈપણ ગુજરાતી પુસ્તક ખરીદવા માટે અમારો સંપર્ક કરો

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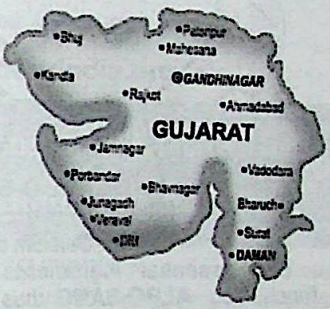
Gujarat

Of Lord Krishna and Mahatma Gandhi

Lalitha Shenoy



Gujarat brings to mind the pranks of Krishna in Dwaraka, the *dandiya raas, garba* and the Dandi yatra of Mahatma Gandhi. Unfortunately, it also brings to mind the Surat plague, the Godhra killings, the recent earthquake and the floods. Gujarat is the land of Amul and all the sweet things that go with it.The state has a fertile, beautiful and prosperous coastline from Kutch to Daman and a hill line from Aravali to the Western hills in the west. With easy access to beautiful hill stations like Mount Abu and Saputara, Gujarat can boast of a welcome to visitors who are fascinated by the legends and stories of bravery and generosity, sacrifice and devotion of the various heroes and heroines that the state has given.

Narsi Mehta was a religious leader who fertilised the religious minds of the people some centuries back. Wild forests of Girnar and Dang, temples at Somnath, historic sites like Lothal and Dwarika attract tourists. Gujarat's rich tradition of textile and handicraft, are unique styles developed as culmination of hundreds of years of experience. The fairs and festivals are a time of rejoicing and rejuvenation when the people shed their inhibitions.

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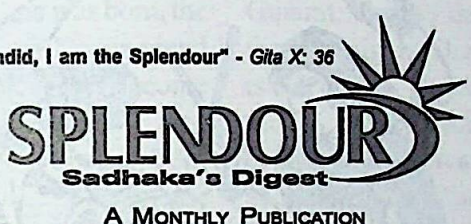
"Of the Splendid, I am the Splendour" - *Gita X: 36*



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Dandiya Raas -popular dance of Gujarat

Dandiya and Raas Garba are the famous dances which are performed round the year, with added interest during Navraatri which is traditionally a time of festivity. The fairs are held in rural areas where the folk art, folk music and folk dances are displayed with all the originality and performing genius.

Gokulashtami or Janamashtami is a special occasion. All the major temples, including those at Dwarka and Dakor, specially dedicated to Lord Krishna are colourfully decorated on this day. Bhajans and Kirtans in these temples are the highlights of the daylong celebrations.

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At the stroke of midnight, when Lord Krishna was born, the chants hailing Lord Krishna rend the air and the devotees become ecstatic. There are live enactments of the scenes from his childhood. The Ras, introduced by Lord Krishna in Gujarat, is performed in temples and homes. Men and women both participate in this rhythmic and colourful folk dance.

Nine days preceding Dussehra have a special significance for the people of Gujarat. They celebrate Navaratri festival which is the most colourful and prominent festival in the State. These celebrations are part of the worship by the followers of the Shakti cult. Men, women and children participate in the Garba dance to the accompaniment of chorus singing and beating of the drums and other folk instruments. There are Garba competitions in major cities and towns. In the Garba and Ras dances there is music, rhythm, grace, sweetness and colour. It is a mode of culture and self expression of a people unique to Gujarat. On the day following the nine nights, Dussera festival is celebrated. The day marks the victory of Lord Rama over the demon King Ravana who had abducted Lord Rama's consort Site. Effigies of Ravana, Meghnath and Kumbhakarna, stuffed with crackers, are burnt at a number of places. The day signifies the victory of good, personified by Rama, over evil, personified by Ravana.

Tarnetar is a small village about 75 kilometers from Rajkot in Saurashtra. Here, a colourful fair takes place. Elegantly dressed in colourful dhotis, waistcoat and head cloth twisted at an angle on their heads, they hold large colourful embroidered umbrellas which indeed have become emblems of the fair. Tarnetar is one of the most important matchmaking melas. An ancient Shiva temple stood on the site. The present temple was built on the banks of a rivulet and has a *kund* or reservoir in the traditional manner. It is usually attended by at least 50,000

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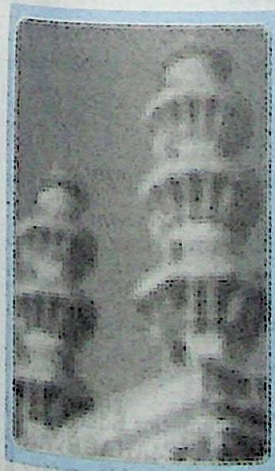
people. The participants are tribal people belonging to various groups, such as the Koli, Bharwad, Rabari, Kanbi, Kathi, Charan, and other castes. The folk music and dances are the attractions of the fair. Tribal folk dressed in colourful embroidered garments and dashing headgear, give themselves up to merrymaking. The fair is held for three days in September.

Important towns of Ahmedabad, Gandhinagar, Baroda, Rajkot, Surat are modern, industrialized and densely populated. Important industries like the Indian Petrochemicals have been established here.

Gir National Park : The sanctuary covers 260 sq km and is home of the Gir (Asiatic) Lion. Other animals like panthers, Indian deer, sambarm chital, nilgai etc. can be spotted here.

Lothal: Recent archaeological excavations have led to the discovery of the 4500 year old city of Lothal which was closely related to the Indus Valley cities Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, both now in Pakistan. This was one of the most important ports on the subcontinent and trade was carried on with Mesopotamia, Egypt and Persia.



Shaking Minarets , Ahmedabad: Shaking Minarets are unique to Gujarat and have no parallel in the world today. The master craftsmen built them in such a way that when one minaret is shaken, the vibrations thus created pass on to the opposite minaret which also starts shaking. The mosque of Siddir Bashir outside Sarangpur Gate, has these shaking minarets. The secret of this unique phenomenon went away with those master craftsmen who had conceived the plan.

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Maharashtra

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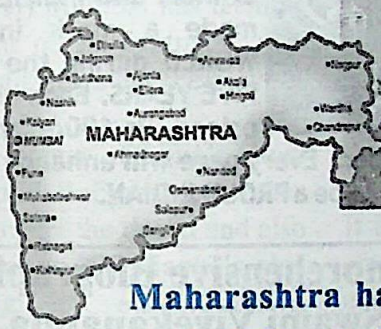

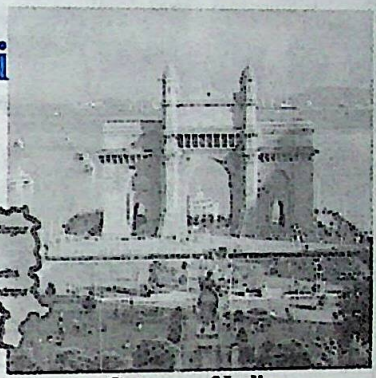

Gateway of India

Maharashtra has the commercial capital(Mumbai) and the cultural centre(Pune) and is one of the developed states of the country.

Maharashtra is the third largest state of India and has Mumbai, the Commercial capital and the City of Dreams as its capital. Mumbai has the Gateway of India, the Victoria Terminus (now called Chhatraptati Shivaji) of the Central Railways, Esselworld, Elephanta caves, Bollywood, Prince of Wales Museum, Jijamata Udyan and others as its main attractions.

Mumbai(formerly Bombay) has always attracted people from all walks of life. They come with stars in their eyes, sometimes they continue shining, at other times get crushed as stardust. The Western and Central railway, the BEST buses form the lifelines of Mumbai. Here it is possible to

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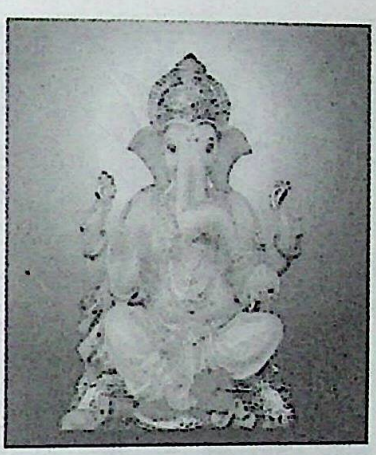
have a meal for a tenner or for a thousand, all depending on where you eat. A gastronomic's delight Mumbai's *vada pav, bhel*, and *misal* have ruled the stomachs for many years. Known for the worst slum in the world (Dharavi) Mumbai has teeming millions on its footpaths, and dazzling stars in their ivory towers.

The center of India's Hindi film world, Bollywood, it churns out films by the dozen and also has various TV channels also hosting entertainment prorammes for all. Mumbai originally was a cluster of seven separate islands, and the southernmost island was called Old Woman's Island.



Ganesha

It took 60 years to merge the seven islands of Bombay into one landmass between 1784 and 1845.The name Bombay was derived from Bom Bahia (The Good Bay), a name given by Portuguese sailor Francis Almeida, in 1508.

Girgaon Chowpatty

Former English cricket captain Douglas Jardine of Bodyline fame was born at Malabar Hill, Mumbai, in 1900. Nobel Laureate Rudyard Kipling who wrote Kim and The Jungle Book was born in Mumbai.

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A Century of Trust

TATA

The year 2004 is significant to the Tata Group. The year marks the death centenary of Jamsetji Tata and the birth centenary of JRD Tata and Naval Tata. It also marks the 50th anniversary of commercial vehicle production at Tata Motors. On this momentous occasion, we pay homage to our founders, who were instrumental in making the Tata Group India's most respected and best known business group.

- Jamsetji Tata (1839-1904)

- Naval Tata (1904-1989)

"If you aim for perfection you will attain excellence.
If you aim for excellence, you may find yourself a little lower."
- JRD Tata (1904-1993)

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TATA MOTORS

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The wooden pole in the centre of the Banganga Tank in Mumbai signifies the centre of the earth. Legend has it that Lord Ram created the tank by piercing the earth with his arrow. The Arabian sea has put forth wonderful but congested and dirty beaches at Chowpatty, Shivaji Park, Juhu in Bombay and Alibagh and other places in the rest of the state.

Mumbai, India's biggest harbor in Maharashtra, houses the headquarters of almost all major banks, financial institutions, insurance companies and also the largest stock exchange of the country.

Ganesha, the elephant God, is the favourite deity of Maharashtra. Temples devoted to Him are aplenty. Siddhivinayak temple in Mumbai has people queuing from 4 in the morning for his *darshan* especially on Tuesdays, Chaturtis and *sankashtis*. Eight shrines devoted to Ganpati , found near Pune, are great tourist attractions especially for the religious minded and the faithful. Moreshwar in Moregaon,

Chhatraptati Shivaji Maharaj

Girijaatmaka Vinayak at Lenyadri, Siddhi Vinayak in Siddhatek, Varadvinayak in Mahad, Mahaganapati in Ranjangaon, Ballaleswar Vinayak at Pali, Shri Vighnahar at Ozar, and Chintamani at Theur form the Ashthavinayaks. Special busses take pilgrims on tour to Ashtavinayak sites.

Besides, the Bhavani temple at Tuljapur, Lord Vittal of Pandharpur are great religious places.

Hill stations on the western ghats like Matheran,

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Mahabaleshwar, Lonavala, Khandala and others attract tourists by their beauty, lovely climate round the year and tourist facilities. Her innumerous forts stand proud and strong. Her scores of temples are sculpted into and out of basalt rock.

Her diverse and colourful cultures are woven into one gigantic quilt. Her festivals galvanise the sleepy thousands into fervent motion. And her miles of silver, white beaches, stretched taut and inviting over the entire coast.

Shivaji Bhosle, founder of the Maratha Empire, was born in 1627. He took the oath to make the land free at the fort Torna at the age of sixteen. This was the start of his lifelong struggle against Mughals and other Muslim powers. By 1680, the year of Shivaji's death, nearly the whole of the Deccan belonged to his kingdom. He had developed an efficient administration and a powerful army. He also encouraged a spirit of independence among the Marathas that enabled them to withstand for 150 years all attempts to conquer them. Shivaji's achievements amongst monumental difficulties were really spectacular and that is why he holds the highest place in Maratha history.

Maharashtra's per capita income - 60% is higher than the National Average. It contributes 22% of India's net value-added output in the organized industrial sector-way ahead of any other state. Navapur is a railway

Elephanta caves – Bombay: There are four rock-cut cave temples. The main cave has a massive 5.8m (19ft) high Trimurthi monolith depicting Shiva as creator, preserver and destroyer. Other panels show Shiva as Ardhanariswar, or half-man, half-woman and performing Tandava dance (Nataraja).

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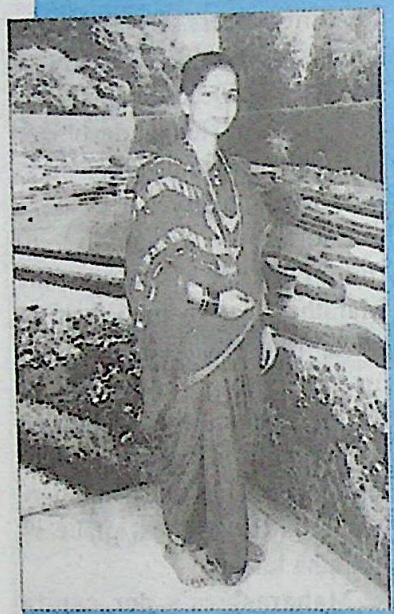

A Typical Maharashtrian Lady

station that is half in Maharashtra and half in Gujarat (the boundary between the states is marked next to the tracks within the station).

Maharashtra has three regions- Western Maharashtra, Vidarbha and Marathwada. The State has seen the rise and fall of several dynasties. It was left to Shivaji to weld the Marathas into a powerful nation. A predominantly Hindu society, Maharashtra is also home to a other religious groups. 70 percent of the people in Maharashtra depend on agriculture which contributes more than 22 percent of the state's income. The other major industries are chemicals and allied products, textiles, electrical and petroleum and allied products.

With a lusty approach to music and dance, drama has always been a strong point in Maharashtra. Mahasivarathiri (festival of Siva), Gokulashtami (Birthday of Krishna), Holi and Vinayaka Chathurthi are the major festivals of fun loving state.

Maharashtrian saris with their distinctive weave and colour are widely acclaimed.

Maharashtra has given birth and housed great Indians like the Mangeshkar sisters, Baba Amte who gave the leprosy affected a sense of independence and pride, Anna Hazare, Medha Patkar, Balasaheb Thackeray, R K Laxman, Sachin Tendulkar, Sunil Gavaskar, P L Deshpande, Kirloskar and many others.

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Vidarbha

Vidarbha is the north-eastern region of Maharashtra state, now forming two divisions (Nagpur and Amravati). It is comparatively backward, and demands for separate statehood within India have been raised by various political factions. The main crop is cotton. Oranges and bananas are main fruit crops here.

Nagpur was the capital of the Bhonsle dynasty of Marathas, who in the mid eighteenth century created a state that covered much of east-central India. After their defeat in the Third Anglo-Maratha War in 1818, the Bhonsle dominions were reduced to Nagpur division, which was taken over by the British in 1853 when the last Maharaja of Nagpur died without a male heir.

The Nagpur division became a part of the British Raj's Central Provinces in 1861. Amravati division, formerly known as Berar, was administered by the Nizam of Hyderabad until 1853, when the British took over governance of the province under the charge of misgovernance by the Nizam. Berar was added to the Central Provinces in 1903.

After Indian Independence, the Central Provinces and Berar became the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh. Vidarbha was transferred to Bombay state in 1956 to unify all Marathi-speaking areas, and became part of Maharashtra state in 1960, when Bombay state was split into the linguistic states of Maharashtra and Gujarat.

Kalidasa smarak is a beautiful monument in memory of the famous poet Kalidasa who wrote 'Meghdootam' from here. Navegaon, Nagzira, the beautiful animal and bird sanctuaries are at Bhandara.

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Aurangabad

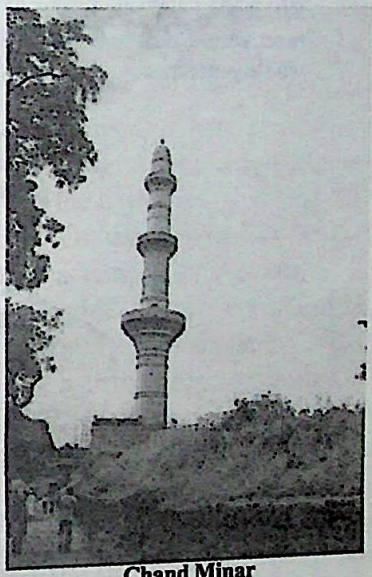
A City Named and Renamed

Vatsala Krishnakumar

This city is an entry portal to Ajanta and Ellora caves

A historic city which has been renamed many times over, Aurangabad's original name was '*khidki*' meaning window. It was once called Daulatabad and later Fateh Nagar and then it was christened Aurangabad after one of the last great Mughal kings, Aurangzeb.

In 1327 A. D. Sultan Mohammed-bin-Tughlak, impressed by the topography of the Deogiri mountains, moved here from Delhi and renamed it Daulatabad or the *City of Fortune*. He set up his capital at Deogiri fort built by the Yadava King Bhillama V in the 12th century.



Chand Minar

This impressive fort with its impregnable fortifications, gigantic walls, deep moats and trenches which can be crossed

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" The fountain of all knowledge is in every one of us."

- Swami Vivekananda

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only over a drawbridge has ingeniously built mazes and entrances.

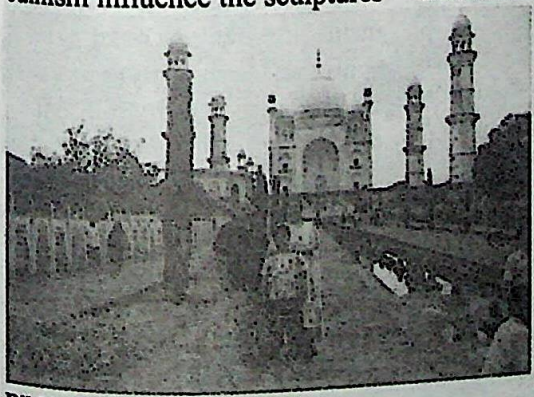
Enroute the tedious walk to the summit of the fort, is the 70 meter high Chand Minar, the six-metre long massive cannon which shines even today, and the beautiful Chand Palace. Though the fort is now in a dilapidated condition, one still wonders and is awestruck at what it would have been in its original glory.

Talking about Aurangabad one cannot miss out the caves of Ellora and Ajanta. At Ellora are 34 rock cut caves spread over about two kilometers built during 5th to 13th century.

Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism influence the sculptures and paintings in the cave. Clearly distinct is the division in the caves based on religion. Cave number 1-12 are the Buddhist caves among which except the 10th all are viharas. Long corridors and large halls mark these caves. 13-29 belong to the Shaivism faith and 30-34 are the Jain caves.

The caves with paintings and the Kailash temple with its huge *shivling* are the best specimens of the days.

On the way to Ellora caves, is a temple of Hanuman, the Bhadra Maruti temple. The uniqueness of this temple is its deity in the sleeping position. As the legend goes, Hanuman rested here for six months after the war that Ram waged against Ravan. Locals believe that if you walk right upto the temple on foot on five consecutive Saturdays, then any wish will be fulfilled. Lakhs of devotees throng the temple every year.



Bibi ka Maqbara

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Also close by is the Ghrushneshwar temple, where seated is one of the 12 Jyotirlings.

The caves of Ajanta, situated at about 105 kms from Aurangabad are truly a marvel. These caves which were lost to the world were discovered by some British officers out on a hunting expedition.

One wonders as to how these caves were excavated on the precipice of a mountain. These caves which form a horse shoe shape depict episodes from the life of Buddha and scenes from the Jataka tales.

Most remarkable is the Buddha's 24 feet long statue depicting his *Maha nirvana*, his release from the cycle of birth. The three-dimensional paintings and the colours and the grandeur depicted in the paintings in the caves are awe inspiring.

Another attraction at Aurangabad is the Bibi ka Maqbara, Aurangzeb's wife's mausoleum constructed during 1651-1661 A. D. by Prince Azam Shah in memory of his mother.

Girl weaving at the loom

This structure which architecturally resembles Taj Mahal with its minarets, symmetric garden, and fountains is made of basalt and marble in some parts. The entrance is grand with wooden doors covered with foliage designs in brass.

Pan-chakki or the mill run with water is another wonder which marks Aurangabad. The water for this mill has its source about 6 kms away and is brought here through earthen pipes. This mill which was used to obtain

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flour without human effort was the brainwave of a religious teacher, Hazarat Baba Shah Musafir and was built in 1774.

Other major tourist attractions are the Sant Gnyaneshwar Udyan a little away from the city which is a replica of the Vrindavan Gardens at Mysore. There is a wonderful musical fountain show which synchronises the fountains on the rhythm of popular Hindi film songs.

The Paithani sarees which sport the *muniya, chatai* and *brocade* designs and range from Rs 5,000 to 3 lakhs per saree are world famous. The Himroo shawls based on the designs found in the caves of Ajanta and Ellora is the other typical local form of art.

Aurangabad is truly a confluence of art, religion and history.

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- *Bhagavad Gita*

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Saputara

The Abode of Serpents

Vatsala Krishnakumar

Situated along the border of Maharashtra and Gujarat is a picturesque hill-station, Saputara. It is an ideal getaway for those who are longing for a break and are on the lookout for a quiet place. There are no noisy rickshaws or taxis unlike some other hill-stations which are becoming highly commercialised and even your mobiles don't beep and disturb you here as there is no network coverage.

The pristine beauty of Saputara is commendable. Laced by rivers like Purna and Gira, this place is surrounded by dense forests inhabited by tribals like Bhils, Kunbis and Warlis. A

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museum in Saputara offers a glimpse into the lifestyle of these tribals and if you are lucky enough you can even watch them playing their traditional musical instruments. Legend has it that Sri Rama spent 11 years of his 14 years of exile in these forests. Placed at an altitude of about 1000 metres in the Dang forest area, it enjoys a favourable cool climate throughout the year and even experiences dense fogs at times. A walk in the rain during the monsoon time is also a wonderful experience.

Like regular hill-stations, Saputara too has a sunrise and sunset point which offers a panoramic view of the valley. The ride to the sunset point in a ropeway makes it even more interesting. The highlight of this ride is the halt midway from where suspended, you can enjoy the view of Saputara with its picturesque lake. Speaking of the lake, the lake is surrounded by so much greenery that it makes boating on it more pleasurable.

A small place, Saputara is a dream for trekkers and hikers with all its significant spots within walking distance. You can take long walks and relax later in the gardens that Saputara has to offer- the Rose Garden or the Step Garden.

At about 200km from Mumbai and about 80km from Nasik, it provides the perfect getaway from the city's hustle-bustle. Go ahead and enjoy the mountain air and surrender yourself to this timeless land which is pretty much the way nature made it.

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Bihar

A Confluence of All Faiths

Gouri Suresh

Present day politics of Bihar and the state's unchallengeable status as the most corrupt in the country are in sharp contrast to Bihar's history, culture and past reputation.

There is enough for the itinerant visitor to recapture the past glory and beauty.

Bihar is a confluence of all faiths of India.There are many places sacred to the Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains in addition to the Hindus. In fact, the term **'Bihar'** came from 'Vihara', meaning a Buddhist Monastery.

Patna, the capital of Bihar is one of the most ancient cities in India.Its old name was 'Patliputra'. It was the birthplace of the tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh. Sri Nanak Dev, the first Guru, had come to Patna and stayed here for many months. Due to all this, the place has many Sikh shrines. A temple of Lord Shiva, the Harmandir, is situated just nine miles from Patna junction.

Fifty-six kilometers from Patna, is Vaishali, which was once a prosperous town and centre of Jain culture. It has a historical past.

Situated on the bank of the holy river Gandak, Vaishali is an important pilgrim centre for Buddhists and Jains alike. Lord Buddha had visited Vaishali several times. It was at the nearby Kilhua that Buddha had given his last sermon.

One of the famous lion pillars, the Ashoka Pillar, can be seen at Vaishali. Vardhamana

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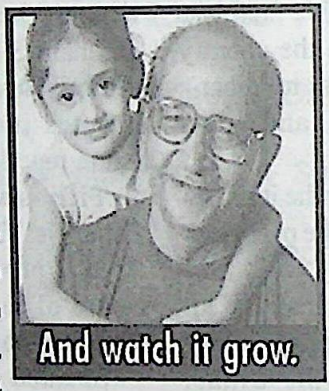

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Mahavira, the 24th Jain Thirthankar was born here and he lived here till twenty-two.

Nalanda, 90 kilometres from Patna, is the place where the world's most ancient residential international university lies in ruins. This university had attracted students from all countries where Buddhism had taken roots. Founded in the 5th Century A.D., the university could boast of two thousand teachers and ten thousand students. It was functional till the 12th century. This was destroyed when Md. Bin Bakthiyar Khilji attacked Bihar. The ruins of this great university can be seen till date in Nalanda. In 1951, an International Centre for Buddhist Studies was established here.

In nearby Biharsharif, Muslims celebrate 'urs' annually at the 'dargah' (tomb) of Saint Malik Ibrahim Baya. In adjacent Baragaon, Hindus perform 'Chhat Puja' with great devotion at the Sun Temple.

Sultanganj, 122 kilometers from Patna, boasts of the site of the ancient sage Jahnu's hermitage on a rock protruding

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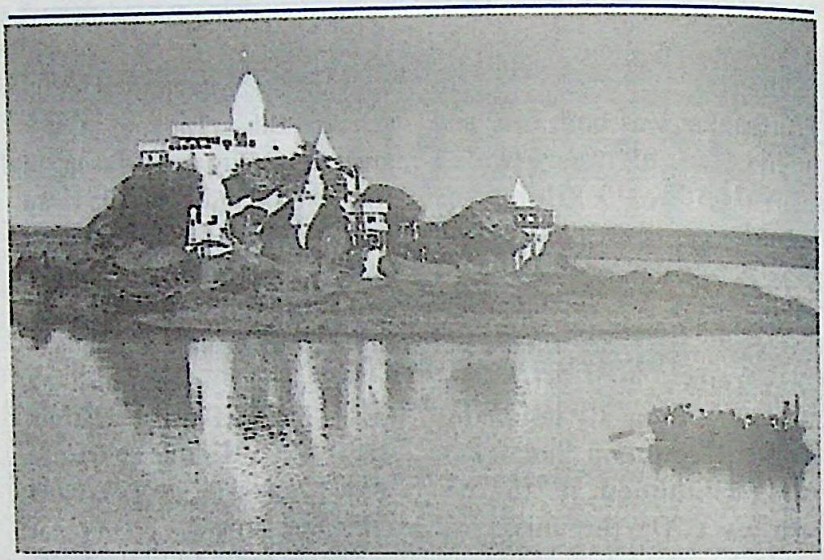

Ajgaivinath Temple on a rocky island in the middle of river Ganga, Sultanganj, Bihar

from the bed of the holy river Ganga. There is an interesting legend on how River Ganga got the name Jahnavi.King Bhageeratha of the solar dynasty had undertaken immense hardships to bring River Ganga from the heaven to the earth. The king's ceaseless efforts had borne fruit and the holy river was following his chariot with great enthusiasm.

On the way, thee was Sage Jahnu's hermitage on a rocky platform. In her zeal and mirth, she knocked over the venerable sage's ashram and disturbed his meditation. The enraged sage took some water from the gurgling waters on his palm and sipped it off! Lo and behold! The river became fully dry in an instant! It is said that the Devas themselves took pity on King Bhageerath and came down to the earth to help him out. On their request, Sage Jahnu released the waters of the mighty river slowly through his left ear. As Ganga had come out of the sage's body, she got the name Jahnavi, meaning Jahnu's daughter.

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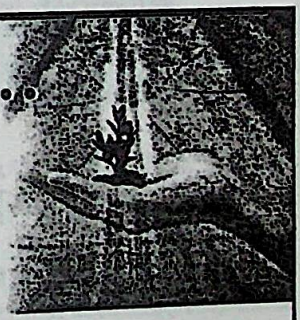
Sonepur 25 kilometers from Patna is famous for the Sonepur Mela that runs for one full month. Thousands of people who come here to sell their wares live for a whole month in tents or open air.

Four square miles of ground virtually becomes a canvas town during the mela. Foreign tourists visit the mela in great numbers, amazed at the variety of goods sold at one place. Sonepur mela holds the largest cattle fair in the world. All rich North Indians buy their elephants from here.

Sonepur Mela became famous during the reign of Aurangazeb, a time when elephant trade went up. Kartik Purnima is the most important religious day during the mela, when lakhs take a ceremonial bath in the Sone, a tributary of Ganga, and offers prayers at the Hariharnath Temple.

According to the most popular legend, Sree Rama established this temple. Many temples of Ram and Sita are

Ayurveda...



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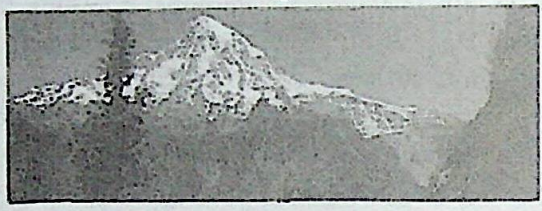

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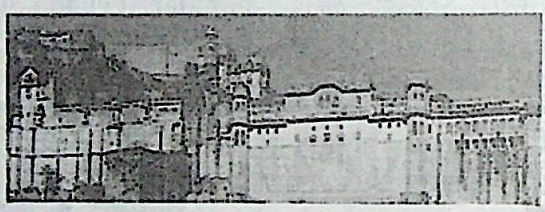

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found in all neighbouring districts also.

A very famous legend associated with Sonepur is that of the elephant and the crocodile of the Bhagavath Purana. Gajendra was a king who been cursed and transformed into an elephant. He used to frequent a lake to quench his thirst.

One day, a mighty crocodile caught hold of his hind leg and just would not leave it. The trial of strength between the two powerful animals went on for long. The crocodile was also not an ordinary one; he was a Gandharva (a celestial being) and had been cursed to this state. In the end, the elephant realised that only God could help him. So he prayed with great devotion. Lord Vishnu appeared on His vehicle Garuda and cut the throat of the crocodile thereby releasing his hold over Gajendra's leg. The crocodile got his release from the curse and turned into his original Gandharva form. The elephant also got salvation.

Bodhgaya is the holiest of holy places for any Buddhist. It is situated 7 miles from Gaya railway station. Buddha was born as prince Gouthama at Kapilavastu on the borders of Nepal. After renouncing family in his youth, he went to Gaya, but could not get solace there. From Gaya, he went to the neighbouring village of Uruvila (modern Uraila). After several years of penance, he got enlightenment under a peepal (bodhi) tree and became Buddha. The present tree at the site is believed to be a descendant of the original tree. Saplings of this tree have been taken with great reverence to different Buddhist countries.

Mahabodhi Vihara or the Bodh Gaya Temple is supposed to be built by Emperor Asoka. It is squarish at the base and cylindrical above. In addition to the main tower in the middle, there are four towers one at each corner. There is a massive image of Buddha in the sitting posture inside the temple. There is a Vajrasana – a seat of stone between the present Bodhi tree and the temple. It is said that

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sitting on this seat, he had got enlightenment. Buddha had stood and gazed at the tree – a stupa has been erected at this spot.

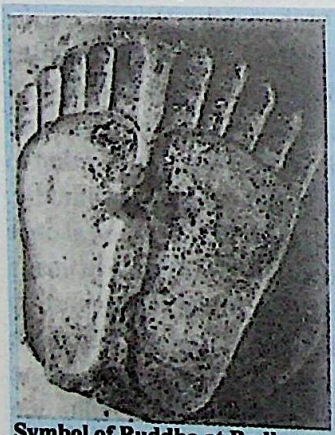
To the east of the temple, flows the Niranjana River (now called Nilanjana) Legend has it that Buddha had placed his begging bowl on the waters of this river and declared that if the bowl went upstream, he would get enlightenment. This was what exactly happened.

Gaya is on the other bank of this river. It is a very important pilgrimage centre for Hindus. Here, Hindus offer oblations for the well being of their dead ancestors. It is believed that a Hindu will reach heaven if his last rites are offered under the famous Akshayabat (the immortal Banyan tree) in the courtyard of the grand Vishnupada Temple.

As per legend, the temple was built on the footsteps of Lord Vishnu.

Rajgir is another Buddhist pilgrim spot of Bihar. Buddha had visited this place before enlightenment.

It is just 7 miles from Nalanda. Saptaparni caves at Rajagriha referred to in the oldest literature of Buddhism have now been identified at Rajgir.



Symbol of Buddha at Bodhgaya

Bodhygaya

There are four places sacred to Buddha. Lumbini in Nepal, where he was born, Sarnath near Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh where he first preached his message, Kushinagar near Ghorakhpur where he died and Bodhgaya where he attained enlightenment. The Mahabodhi temple at Bodhgaya contains a colossal gilded image of the Buddha.

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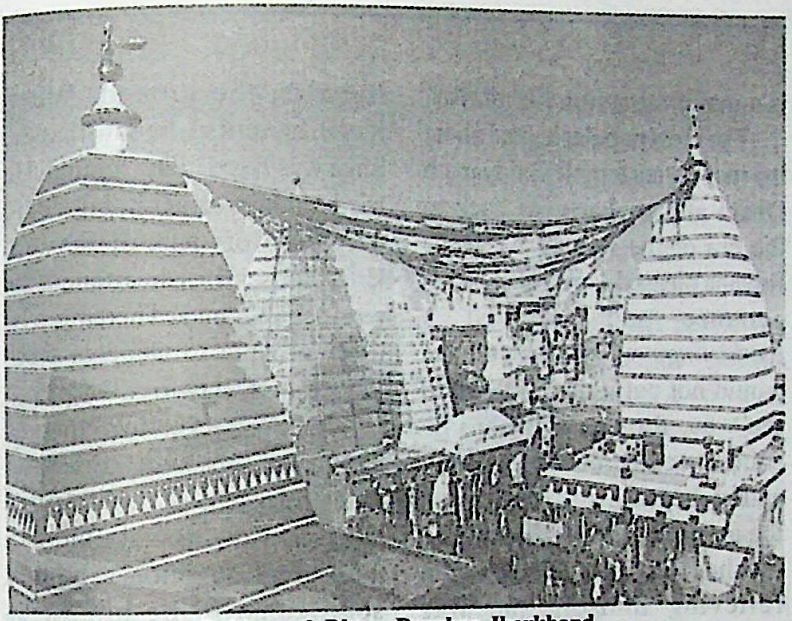

Baidyanath Dham, Deoghar, Jharkhand

Jharkhand

Rich in Resources and Beauty

The state of *Jharkhand* was carved out of Bihar on 15th November 2000. This mineral rich state boasts of quite a few spots of religious significance and scenic beauty also. Capital Ranchi has a historic past. On the Ranchi Hill, which gives an idyllic bird's eye of the entire city, the British Raj used to hang dozens of tribal freedom fighters from trees in public view to warn people against joining the freedom movement. The Shiva Temple glittering amongst the gathering darkness as dusk falls on this Hill

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is a major attraction for tourists.

The most popular legend about the idol of this temple Baidyanath Dham at Deoghar goes back to the era of the Ramayana. Once Ravana pleased Lord Shiva by his penance and received a *jyothirlinga* on condition that he would not put it on the floor on the way. Ravana was sure he could meet the condition easily and so began his flight through the air. However, by the time he reached Deoghar, he felt like relieving himself and was compelled to alight and place the *linga* on the ground. When Ravana returned, he saw that the linga was fixed to the ground. He tried his best to lift it, but could only chip off part of the top. Humbled and disheartened, he returned to Lanka. Thereafter, he used to come to Deoghar from Lanka every day to offer prayer.

There is a legend on how the temple got this name also. After Ravana's death, a hunter by name Baiju used to worship the idol with great devotion. The idol soon came to be known as Baijunath, which later became

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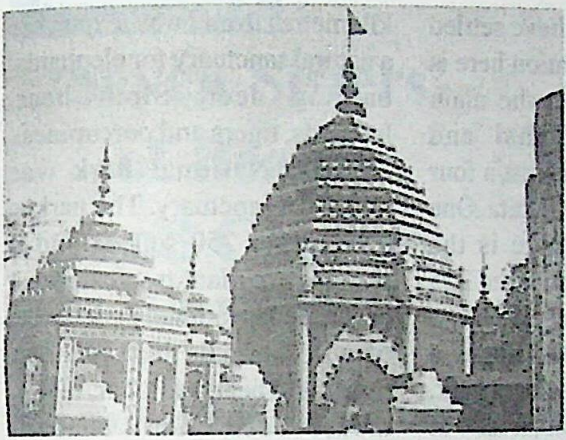

Ma Chinnamastika Temple, Rajrappa, Hazaribagh, Jharkhand

Baidyanath. The lingam is about 4" in diameter and it projects 4" from the centre of a large slab. Nobody knows how much of it is buried.

Parasnath is to the Jains what Deoghar is to the Hindus. On the summit of the Parasnath Hill, there is a beautiful Jain temple built of white marble. Devotees have to climb over ten kilometers from the foot of the hill to reach the peak and the cave that houses the Jain temple.

Jain images are frequently mistaken for Buddha. Idols of Mahavir are in the Padmasan or Khadgasan posture; with gaze fixed on the tip of the nose, facial expression one of detachment. Digambar Jain images are nude, with left palms on the right palms whereas Swetambar Jain images have loincloths and right palms on left palms. Both types of temples can be seen on the Parasnath hills.

There are a few places in Jharkhand regularly visited by tourists just for their scenic beauty. Netarhat, popularly called 'The Queen of Chhotanagpur is154 kilometres west of Ranchi. Netarhat is a plateau at a height of 3,700', covered with thick forests. People throng here to get a breathtaking view of the sunrise and sunset.

Jamshedpur is the most important steel city of India. It is also one of the best planned cities in the country. Many people belonging to Bihar and other

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neighbouring states have settled here. The railway station here is called Tatanagar. On the main line between Mumbai and Howrah, Tatanagar is just a four hours journey from Kolkata. One of the attractions here is the **Jubilee Park** spread over 225 acres of lush greenery. It has a Moghul garden with fountains, a rose garden, an amusement park, a zoo, a laser fountain, a lake of 40 acres with boating facility etc. The park within the city is a model for the harmonious co-existence of industry and environment. Dalma Hills, 20 kilometres from Jamshedpur, are a natural sanctuary for elephants, barking deer, Sloth bear, leopards, tigers and porcupines..

Betla National Park was initially a sanctuary. The park is spread over 250 sq.kms and it features luxuriant tropical forest cover. Betla National park boasts of wild animals like panther, tiger, wild bear, sambhar, nilgai, mouse deer, gaur, cheetal, elephant, langur etc. living in large families. There are historical monuments of the 16th Century, waterfalls and hot springs also in Betla.

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'Seven Sisters' of Beauty and Charm

Gouri Suresh

The mystic North east is a land of clouds and wildlife, of natural beauty and folk lore

These are Meghalaya, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura. All these states have great scenic beauty and are famous for their Hindu and Buddhist temples.

Meghalaya means the abode of clouds. The state has borders with Assam and Bangladesh. Capital Shillong is at a height of 1496 metres above sea level. Meghlaya is one of the most beautiful states of India. Rich green forests, cascading waterfalls, misty mountains and the unique flora and fauna make the state an ideal tourist destination. There are 3 hill ranges in Meghalaya – Khasi, Jaintia and Garo. These are also the names of the three most important tribes.

Meghalaya is ideal for adventure tourism. There are many caves in all the hill ranges. It has many waterfalls Krem Kotstat, 3650 m. long, has 8 entrances. Its main entrance is through a deep pool. The entrance passage of Krem Umshangtat in Jaintia Hills has diameter of 350 m. while

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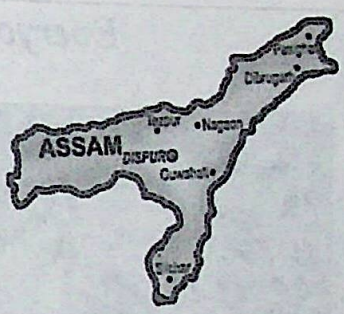
another cave in the Garo Hills is just 1 m. in diameter though it is the second longest cave in the subcontinent, 5334 m. long!

Trekking in the state is very exciting as the terrain is rugged while at the same time snow less. The rare animals on the way add to the exotic feeling. While Cheerapunji gets 12,000 mm. of rainfall annually, Sohra, just 50 kms away, gets only 2,200 mms.

Majority of the population has been converted to Christianity. Non-Christians continue with their old customs and beliefs. One such custom is erecting memorials for the dead. These are in fact wooden posts cut in the shape and form of the deceased, with faces engraved.

Assam

Assam is the biggest state of the North East and the home of the mighty river Brahmaputra. Its lush green forests, famed tea gardens, extensive hilly tracts, ancient temples and monuments, national parks and sanctuaries with incredibly varied wildlife and colourful festivals attract



domestic as well as foreign tourists in great numbers. In addition to capital Dispur, there are well-developed cities like Guwahati, Dibrugarh, Tezpur, Jorhat, Silchar and Lilabari.

Guwahati was once known as Pragjyothishapura meaning 'the light of the east'. It is situated on the bank of Brahmaputra. A cruise on this magnificent river is a breathtaking experience. Pragjyothishapura, also called Kamarupadesha was a centre of astrology in the olden days.

A major attraction about 8 kms from Guwahati is the Kamakhya Temple, the greatest shrine of Tantric Shakthism. This Devi temple is one of the Shakthi Peethams. 'Kamakhya' means 'one who grants desires'.

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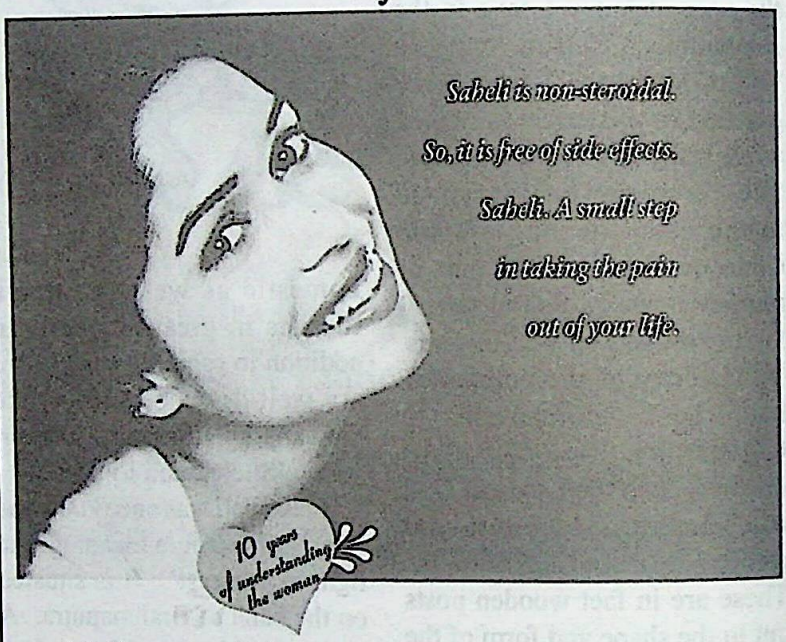

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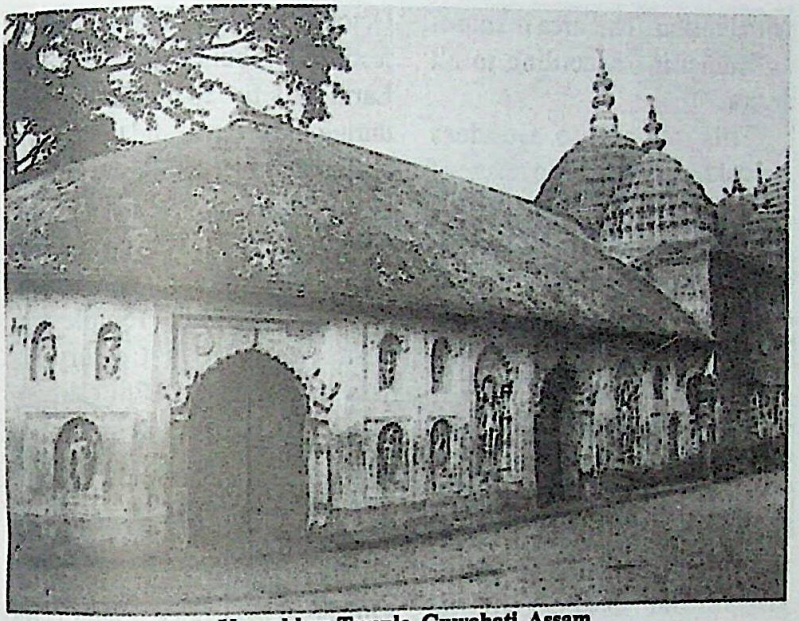

Kamakhya Temple, Guwahati, Assam

Kalika Purana, an ancient work in Sanskrit, describes the Devi as giver of all desires, including salvation.

Kamakhya

Goddess Kamakhya represents a composite picture made up of several conceptions of the Goddess at different epochs in history. This shrine is held in great veneration all over India and frequented by numerous pilgrims. Ancient Assam has been frequently mentioned in the Puranik and Tantrik literature as Kamarupa.

Kamarupa's boundaries are thus described in the Yogini Tantra. "From the Kanchana mountain of Nepal to the junction of River Brahmaputra; from Karatoya to Dikkaravasini. In the north there is Kanjagiri, on the west is the river Karatoya. Oh, Daughter of Himalaya! On the east is river Diksh, the best of the Tirthas, and on the south is the confluence of Brahmaputra

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with Laksha. This area is known as Kamarupa according to all sastras."

This temple to Goddess Kamakhya contains no image of the Goddess. Within the temple there is a cave and in one corner of it there is a stone on which is sculptured the symbol of the Yoni of the Goddess. There is a natural spring with the cave by the oozing water of which this stone is kept moist. Offerings of flowers and leaves are made on this symbol. In other respects, the rites, ceremonies and rituals are similar to those of the Goddess Kali.

When Lord Shiva, infuriated after the Daksh Yaaga was carrying the dead body of Sati Devi on his trident, Lord Vishnu cut the body into several pieces, which fell in different places in India. Each of these spots became a Shakthi Peetha. Sati's reproductive parts (yoni) had fallen here. Thus there is no image of Shakthi in this temple.

Ambuvaci (Ameti) is celebrated for 3 days here during Durga Puja in September-October. This is a unique fertility festival it is believed that Mother Earth gets her menstrual period during these days, and the temple is closed. On these days, ground is not tilled and seeds are not sown. After 3 days, the temple is opened with great festivity.

The Kamakhya Temple was destroyed in the 16th Century, but was rebuilt in the 17th Century by King Nara Narayana of Coochbihar. Kamakhya Devi Temple is an ideal place to study Assamese sculptural work.

Navagraha Temple near Guwahati was once a centre for study of astrology. Another famous temple near Guwahati is the Hayagriva Mahadeva Temple. Hindus worship the deity in this imposing temple as

Shillong

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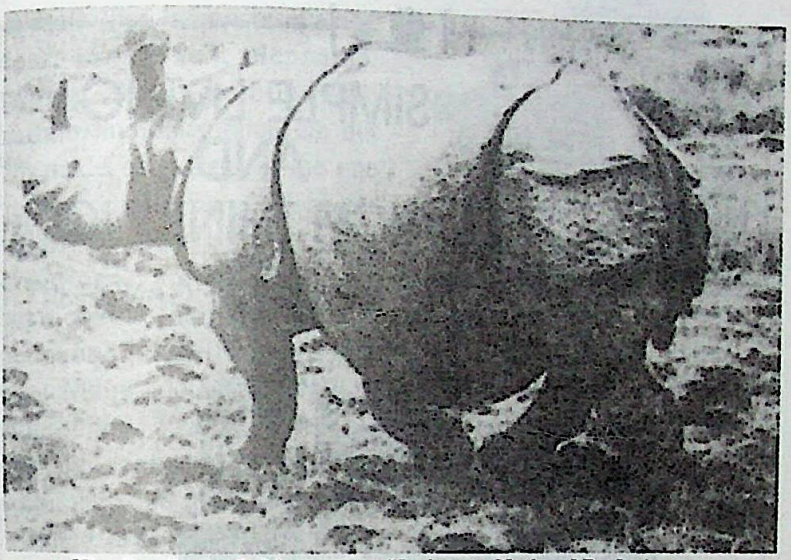

The One horned rhinoceros at Kaziranga National Park, Assam

the Man-Lion incarnation (Narasimha avthar) while Buddhists consider the deity to be Lord Buddha. This temple was rebuilt in the 16th Century.

Assam was an ancient centre of Sun worship. Images of twelve Adityas can be seen here with Kashyap in the middle, on a circular stone tablet.

About 300 kms east of Guwahati is the largest river island in the world Majuli. The island is home to 5 different races of tribals. Majuli is a major migratory path for ducks, geese and other birds. It has been proposed as the 21st UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The scenic town of Haflong is Assam's main hill station. 9 kms south of Haflong, is Jatinga.This place is famous for the mass suicide committed by thousands of birds that come here in summer. Why they do so is not known. Assam's incredibly varied wildlife brings visitors from all around the world.

Adjoining the Brahmaputra is the Kaziranga National Park. It is home to 39 species of wild

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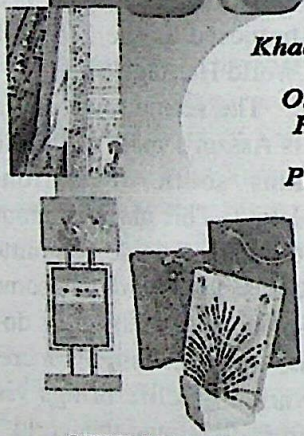

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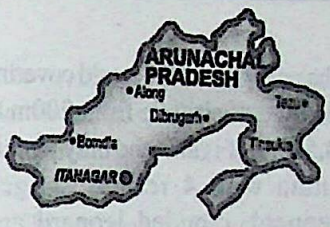
animals like Indian bison, hog deer, jungle cat, elephants, swamp deer, Asiatic wild buffalo, hoolock gibbon, etc. but the pride of Assam is the one horned rhinoceros. 400 species of birds live in the park. Prominent among them are cormorants, herons, egrets, pelicans, hornbills, partridges etc. Many species of reptiles, amphibians, fishes and insects can be seen in the park in addition to 500 species of plants.

There are seven other wildlife sanctuaries in Assam. Some of them are the Orang Wildlife Sanctuary, Pabha Sanctuary, Sonai Rupai Wildlife Sanctuary etc. In addition to these, there are the Barnadi Game Reserve and the Pani Dihing Bird Sanctuary.

The most important festival of Assam is Bihu. Three Bihus are celebrated every year to mark the changing seasons. The springtime festival called Bohag Bihu in April is the preeminent of the three bihus. Ambubasi Mela at the Kamakhya Temple attracts large crowds too.



Arunachal Pradesh

Arunachal Pradesh is a mysterious, magical, mystical land tucked away in the northeast tip of India. The majestic Himalayas stand high along the northern border. There are many snow fed rivers and rivulets. In fact, the entire state is divided into five river valleys.

The people believed to be of Mongoloid stock are of different groups – those belonging to the Mahayana Buddhism, Hinayana Buddhism, and an elementary form of Vaishnavism.

The 17th Century Tawang Monastery overlooks the wide Tawang Valley at a height of 10,000'. At 14,000', there is high altitude lake of crystal clear water. Both sides of the lake are decked with miles and miles of Rhododendrons of various hues. Tipi is a botanical station with 500 varieties of orchids.

Namdapha National Park is

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the only park in the world covering a range of altitude from 200m to 4,500m. It is also the only park in India with 4 felines – tiger, leopard, clouded leopard and snow leopard. Pakhul Wildlife Sanctuary is one of the largest in the state.

In capital Itanagar are situated Gekar Sinyi (Ganga Lake), Jawaharlal Nehru Museum, Ita Fort (ruins), Buddhist Temple, D'Ering Wildlife Sanctuary, Mouling National Park etc. at Dapariyo, there is the Menga Cave Temple of Lord Shiva. Pilgrims crowd here on Makar Sankranti and Shivrathri.

The famous Parshuram Kund is located 21 kms northeast of Tezu. As per the Kalika Purana, Parshuram had washed away the sin of killing his mother in this kund known as Brahma Kund in olden times.

Roing is known for the historical Fort of Bhishmaknagar. This fort was excavated in 1996-97. This shows the penetration of Aryan culture into Arunachal Pradesh in the 4th Century A.D. Some believe that this Bhishmaknagar is the same as the capital city of King Bhishmaka, father of Lord Krishna's spouse Rukmini.

Nagaland

Nagaland is one of India's smallest states. Naga Hills run through the state. Saramti is the highest peak at 12,600'. The general terrain of the state is mountainous and thickly wooded, cut by deep river valleys. Kohima, the capital has many sites worth seeing. The altitude of Kohima is 1,444 m. Nagaland has a pleasant climate throughout the year.

Dimapur, 74 kms from Kohima is the commercial town of Nagaland. It is the only airport in the state and is connected to New Delhi and Kolkata. It is also connected by rail and road. Ruins of the medieval Kachari Kingdom can be seen here.37 kms from Dimapur is the Intangki Wildlife Sanctuary that boasts of some endangered species of animals.

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Nagas belong to the Indo-Mongoloid stock. At present, there are twenty tribes of Nagas. Their traditional religion is animistic, but they believe in the Supreme Creator and afterlife. Nature is believed to have invisible forces. Minor deities and spirits are worshipped. Priests and medicine men claim to mediate with them. Different tribal festivals are celebrated practically in all months of the year. Languages spoken are English, Hindi, Nagamese and local dialects.

Manipur

Manipur is a state surrounded by hill ranges on all sides. 'Mani' means jewel and 'pur' means city. Truly, Manipur is a jewel city. Lord Irwin had described Manipur as the Switzerland of India. It is a land of gentle hills, emerald green valleys, blue lakes and soft breeze. 90% of it is mountainous. Rivers form waterways here. The flora, especially the orchids display great variety. Loktak Lake is the biggest freshwater lake in India. Mao and Ukhrul are hill resorts. Imphal the capital is in a valley.

This state of exotic landscape never lost its link with the Indian culture. Once Radha and Krishna were performing the Rasa Dance here, their privacy being guarded by Lord Shiva. Enchanted by the spectacle, Goddess Durga requested Shiva to dance with her. Seeing them dancing, Lord Vishnu and the other Gods joined in too! Serpent Anantha shone the jewels on his hoods on to this land.

Chitrangada was the crown princess of Manipur. Her father was the Gandharva King Chitrabahana. During his journey through various countries, crossing Anga, Kalinga and Vanga, Arjuna reached Manipur where he met the beautiful princess and fell in love with her and approached her father for permission to marry her.

King Chitravahana agreed on condition that Arjuna should give his son, whenever he would

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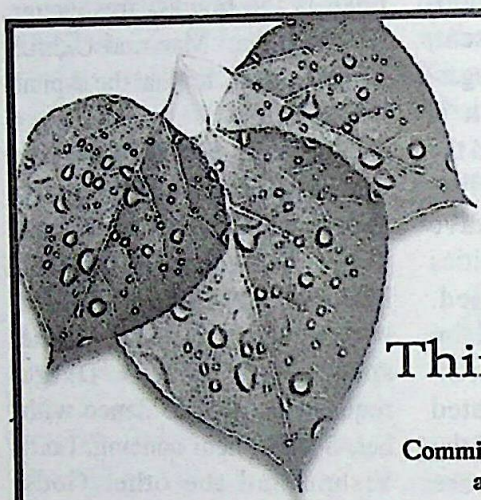

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Naga Dancers

be born, to him. This was because King Chitravahana had no heir. Arjuna agreed and married the princess. He stayed in Manipur for three years and son Babhruvahana was born. As promised, when Arjuna left for Hasthinapura, Babhruvahana remained in Manipur.

Most of the Bishnupriya Manipuris and Meities believe that they are the descendants of Babhruvahana and hence are kshatriyas. In their opinion, the name of the place itself proves that Vedic civilization had existed in Manipur.

Another interesting legend is about how Lord Shiva was once searching for a suitable place to dance and chose Manipur. On seeing the land swampy, he drained it by directing the extra water underground. One can still see the Imphal River with three branches flowing southward and entering into an underground canal. Later, water gets out of three big holes in a mountain and falls into River Chindwin, proceeding to Myanmar.

Vaishnavism is part of life in Manipur. They are so devoted to Krishna that almost all their art forms sign His stories. Love of art and beauty is inherent in the

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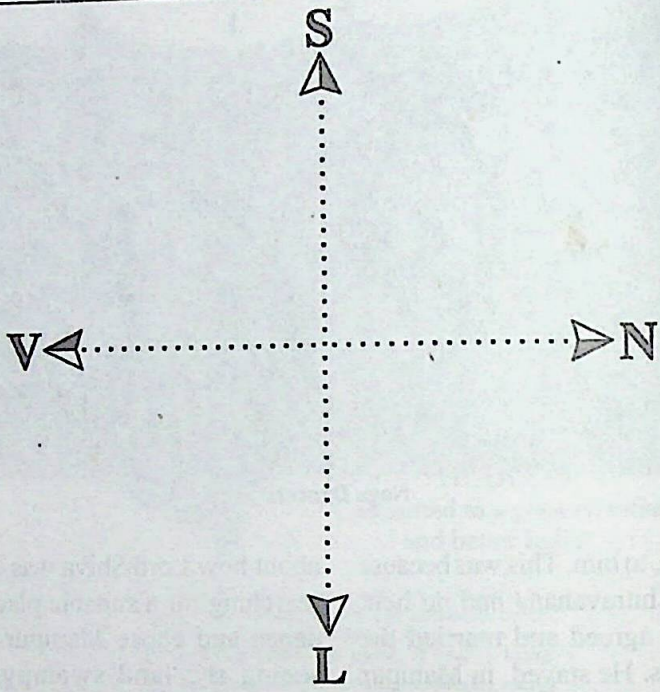

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people. Almost all Manipuri girls can sing and dance. The dance forms are famed for the beauty of the lyrics and also the rhythm. All Manipuri Dance forms – whether folk, classical or modern – are devotional. They all have a spiritual, religious basis. Some dances are dedications to sylvan deities. Some show the evolution of man from the beginning to the present times.

The highest form of Manipuri dance is the Ras Lila, which is a highly stylized, sublime and graceful dance form with rich costumes. It can be solo, duet or group. It is generally performed in an enclosure in front of a temple. Other than Vaishnavites, Christians and Muslims are also seen in Manipur.

Mizoram

Mizoram is a land of great natural beauty. In the Mizo language, the word Mizoram means 'land of highlanders'. Topographically, hills dominate the state. The highest peak is the Blue Mountain, at 2,165 metres. Aizwal, the capital is at an altitude of 4,000'. In general, hills are steep and gorges are deep. Pine trees grow in clusters in many places. The flora and fauna are rich.

Mizo Youth

Vantawng is the highest waterfall in Mizoram. It is 5 kms from the hill station Thezawl. Tamdil is a natural lake surrounded by dense forest.

Harvest festivals and festivals for departed souls are also celebrated. Bamboo dance is the most famous dance of the state.

Poor transport and communication is an obstacle to growth and development. There are no railways. Some low

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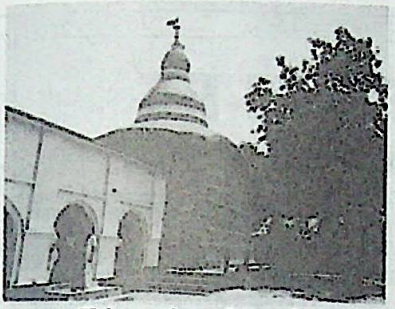

Tripureshwari temple

capacity Indian domestic flights ply from Aizwal to Silcher and Kolkata.

Tripura

It is believed that the word Tripura came from the name of the presiding deity of the land, Tripura Sundari. Some believe that the name is a modification of the word 'Tripura' meaning a land adjoining water. Long back, the kingdom of Tripura had extended from the Garo Hills up to the Bay of Bengal. Even during the British rule, Tripura was an independent kingdom. The capital of Tripura is Agartala. Two-third of the land is forest. There are many tourist spots here including famous viharas, temples and palaces.

Venuban Vihar, a famous Buddha temple in Agartala is a small shrine, but has beautiful idols brought from Burma. Buddha Jayanti is celebrated here on Buddha Purnima day followed by a big fair. The Buddha Temple at Pechartal, North Tripura is one of the oldest in the state. The idol in this temple is also from Burma. Tripura Sundari Temple, built in 1501 by King Dhanya Manikya, is also called Kurma Temple because the structure is shaped as a kurma (tortoise). The sanctum sanctorum is conical in shape. The idol here is of Kali.

According to legend, this temple is also a Shakthi Peetham as the right foot of Mata Sati had fallen here. The place has been hence called Matabari. The biggest festival at this temple is Diwali. Of the mela on Diwali, about two lakhs of devotees throng to Tripura Sundari Temple.

On the eastern side of the temple is the Kalyan Sagar, 55

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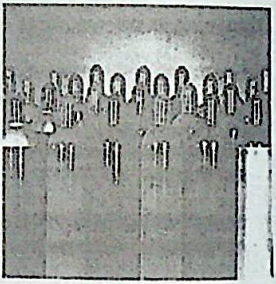

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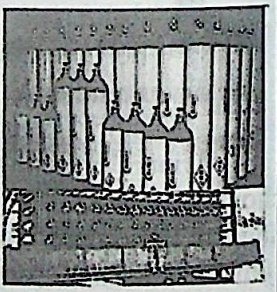

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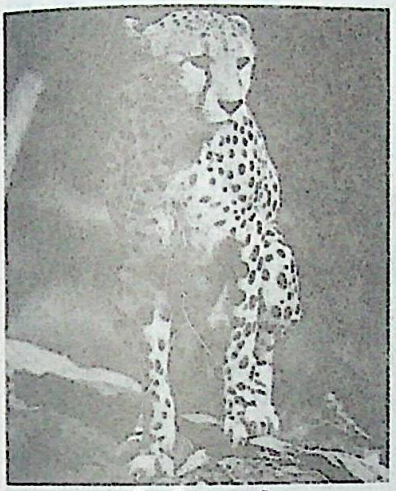

On the prowl

kms from Agartala. Fishes and tortoises of gigantic proportions are seen in this water body. Feeding 'muri' (popped rice) to them is common.

There are many grand palaces in Tripura. Ujjayanta Palace spread over 1 sq.km area is situated in Agartala. Built by Maharaja Radha Kishore Manakya in 1899-01, this palace has two storeys with combination architecture.

In 1917, Maharaja Birendra Kishore Manikya built a palace on Kunjaban, a green hillock, and named it Pushpabanta Palace. It is popularly known as Kunjaban palace. Rabindranath Tagore had stayed here in 1926 and composed many songs. At present, this palace is the official residence of the Governor of Tripura. Neermahal, built in 1930 in the middle of a natural lake of 5.35 sq.kms. area at Rudrasagar is the only lake palace in eastern India. The Hindu and Moghul architectures of this palace is a feast for the eyes. Watersports is common in the Dumboor Lake spread over 41 sq.kms. There are 48 islands in this lake. It is 120 kms. from Agartala.

Jampin Hill is another major tourist attraction. There is an eternal spring here at 3,000' of altitude. The hill is covered with dense green forests and orange gardens. In the rainy season, one can walk through the clouds here. Views of rising and setting sun are stunning. Trekking routes are excellent. While visiting the seven sisters will provide a tourist with a lifetime of pleasant memories of temples of Hindus and Buddhists and the pure grandeur of Mother Nature.

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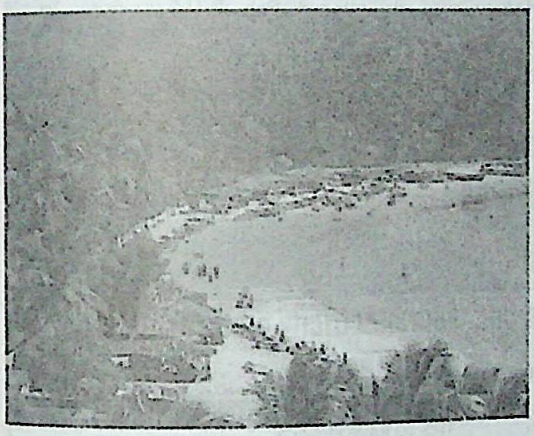
Goa

Beaches, Temples and St Xavier



LAND OF BEACHES, TEMPLES AND CHURCHES, GOA IS FASCINATING FOR TOURISTS

Goa is the attractive land of beaches, temples, Portuguese buildings and St Francis Xavier. Tourists flock here to see all this and much more. The local people are known for their love of singing and dancing, fish curry, kaju feni and a relaxed way of life.

With its 100km long coastline Goa is a land of golden beaches against a back drop of coconut palms.

More vacationers visit Goa every year than any other destination on the west coast of India because of its wonderful climate, a glorious history richly preserved in churches, forts, traditional homes, villages and its cities, Spectacular pageantry, Colourful festivals. Warm and gracious people. Superb cuisine. Goa is one of India's most laid back, yet sophisticated and exciting , destinations.

From miles and miles of

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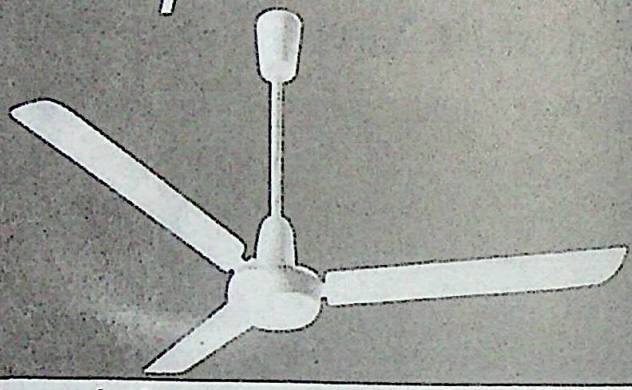
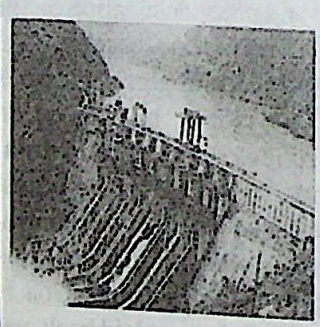


When your fan is on... your electricity meter is also on



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- Avoid frequent opening & closing of refrigerator & air-conditioned rooms.
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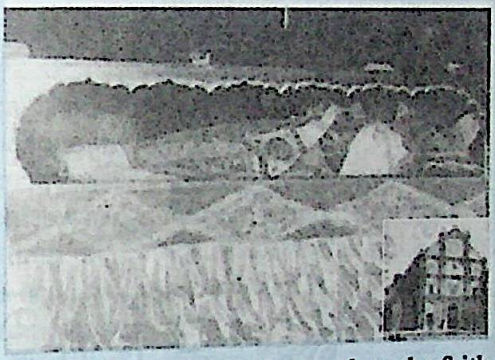
Basilica of Bom Jesus: Built in 16th century, the most popular and famous of all the churches in Goa. The mortal remains of St. Francis Xavier, kept in a rich casket, are enshrined here.Many miracles have been attributed to St Francis. He was said to have possessed the gift of tongues, to have healed the sick and even to have raised the dead; but for the last, at least, there is no real evidence. The real miracle of his life, as has been said, was the miracle of his personality, by which he was able to convert thousands to the faith wherever he went and to win their passionate devotion.



He died abandoned with but one companion, without the sacraments or Christian burial. But within a few weeks his body was recovered and found to be perfectly incorrupt. It was brought to Goa and received there with a devotion and an enthusiasm which showed that the people had already recognized him as a saint. He was beatified by Pope Paul V in 1619 and canonized together with St Ignatius by Pope Gregory XV, on March 12th, 1622. He is now the patron of all the missions of the Catholic Church.

sunny beaches, to the splendors of its quaint cities, towns and cobbled alleyways, Goa is more than just beaches and sunshine. It's also the charm and magic of toxic resorts, a verdant green countryside, lush green forests and abundant wildlife topped with the legendary warmth and hospitality of the Goan people.

And away from the beaten track, travelers discover a

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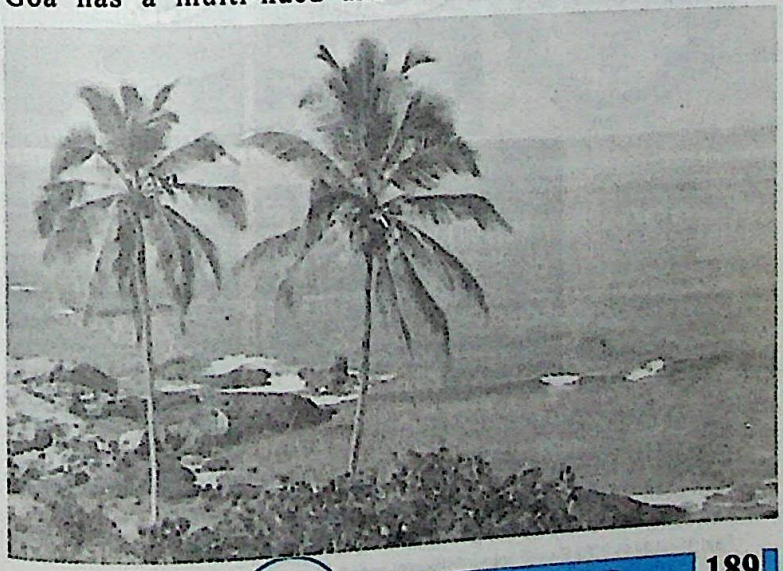
romantic and other-century Goa in its medieval small towns, and beautiful villagers, with rich flora and fauna. There is so much to see.

This 'Pearl of the Orient" and a "Tourist Paradise", Goa is located on the western coast of India in the coastal belt known as Konkan. The Portuguese occupied it till the sixties when it became independent and formed part of Daman and Diu.

Goa is the meeting point of races, religions and cultures of East and West over the centuries, Goa has a multi-hued and distinctive lifestyle quite different from the rest of India. Hindu and Catholic communities make up almost the entire population with minority representation of Muslims and other religions. entire population with minority representation of Muslims and other religions.

All the communities have mutual respect towards one another and their secular outlook has given Goa a long and an unbroken tradition of religious harmony. The warm and tolerant nature of the Goans allows them to celebrate and enjoy the



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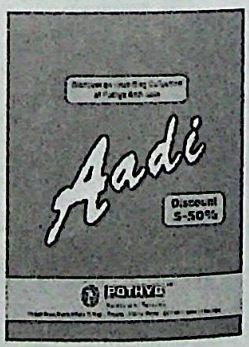

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Goa Carnival

Joyous 3-day festival celebrated all over Goa before the beginning of Lent. Lot of music & dancing and masquerades and processions led by the legendary King Momo.

festivals of various religions such as Ganesh Chaturthi, Diwali, Christmas, Easter and Id with equal enthusiasm.

Panaji (Panjim) is the state capital located on the banks of the Mandovi river and Vasco, Margao, Mapusa and Ponda are the other major towns. Goa is serviced by an international/ national airport located at Dabolim near Vasco. An intra-state and inter-state bus network plays an important role in visiting Goa.

The vast green expanse of the Sahyadri mountain range ensures that Goa has an abundance of water. The sea and rivers abound in seafood - prawns, mackerels, sardines, crabs and lobsters are the most popular with the locals and the visitors.

Along with English which is widely spoken all over Goa, Konkani and Marathi are the state languages. The national language Hindi is also well understood.

Goan cuisine is a blend of different influences the Goans had to endure during the centuries. The staple food in Goa is fish and rice, both among the Hindus and the Catholics. Unlike the Christian food the Hindu Goan food is not strongly influenced by the Portuguese cuisine. Hindus visit Goa as many of the famous temples are located here. Christians flock to see St Francis Xavier.

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From Bendha Kaluru to Bangalore

R. K. Narayan

A hunter was separated from his companions. Night came on suddenly. He sighted a small hut, and knocked on the door; an old woman came out.

'I have lost my way, mother, give me some food.'

'You look a noble man, Sir, and what should I have fit for you to eat?'

'Anything. I am hungry.'

'I have a bean-field behind my house and it has yielded me a good crop this year. If your taste permits it...' Presently she placed a plateful of beans before the visitor, and he ate it with great relish, found grass for his horse too, and was on his way again.

It was later learnt that this visitor was none other than the king himself, and the village came to be known as the Town of Boiled Beans (Bendha Kaluru later abbreviated to 'Bangaluru').

When we emerge from the mists of tradition, we learn that Kempe Gowda I built the town in 1537 AD and constructed a mud fort around it. Sensing that this town was bound to grow beyond the walls of his mud fort, he built watchtowers at four points to indicate its future boundaries.

On the North at Bellary Road, South at Lal Bagh, the Eastern one on a rock near Ulsoor, the Western overlooking Kempambudi Tank.

An astrologer studied the conjunction of stars and fixed an auspicious day on which Kempe Gowda marked off, with the

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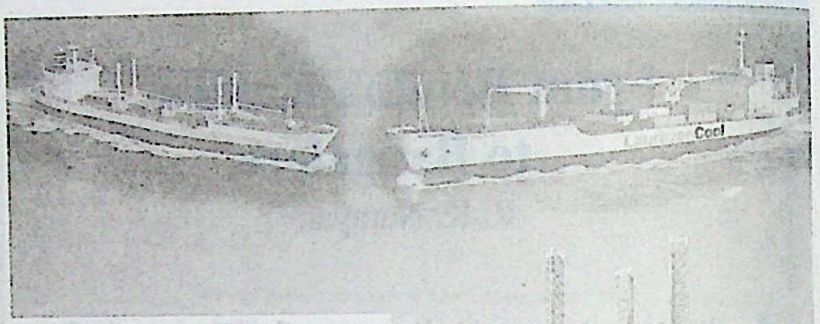

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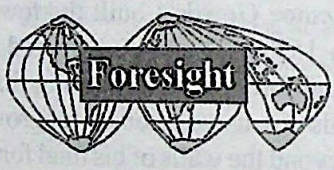

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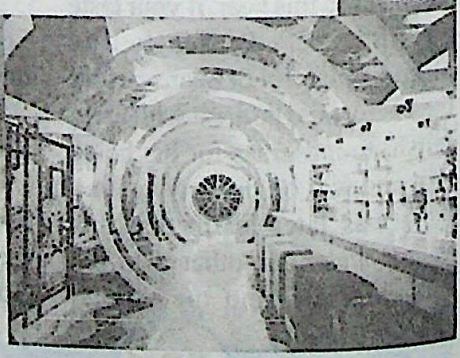

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sharp end of a plough, two streets, one running east to west (between Ulsoor Gate and Railway Goods shed) and the other running north to south (from Yelahanka Gate to the fort). Thereafter he built temples for Vinayaka who brings luck, and Anjaneya, the God of Power. He also built the famous Bull Temple (Basavangudi), and many others.

The astrologer had displayed great astuteness and foresight. The area within the markings of the plough, now throbs with life and activity (even too much of it as it may seem), if one watches the flow of traffic and the jam of pedestrians in the streets running east to west, and north to south, intersecting, cutting, weaving themselves into a bewildering maze of main streets, proliferating into side-streets, lanes, bylanes, and blind alleys, without a square inch of space being left unused.

The octogenarian one notices on a pyol, spiritedly arguing with a circle of cronies, must have learnt or taught the alphabet in that children's school under a faded signboard, those pawnbrokers seated cross-legged, in their narrow parlours, amidst a heap of used clothes and metal-ware, probably have been philosophers and guides to desperate souls seeking ready cash. And ranged along further, yarn-brokers, cycle-repairers, and grain merchants; vendors of sweets displaying seductively a hundred delicacies on trays, all these must have come of a long line of octogenarians, sweet-vendors, pawnbrokers, and the rest, forming the warp and weft of the social fabric hereabout.

Passing down, one may also have a sudden glimpse of the face of a god, shining in the soft light of a wick-lamp inside a shrine, of devotees kneeling in silent prayer inside a mosque, and a church too, where I step in to read the inscription under a portrait in the foyer: 'Rev. Benjamin Rice (1814-1887)-an unwearisome labourer in various departments. An excellent Kanarese Preacher, who delivered his sermons in

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Vidhan Soudha,Bangalore

Kannada for over fifty years.' That was in 1830 or thereabouts. The loungers, one notices, reclining on the rusty shutters of a closed shop also have a look of permanence about them. Everything and everyone here bears an institutional touch, giving one a feeling that they must have gone on living here generation after generation, never stepping beyond their teeming orbit, and may not have even noticed the development of Bangalore in other directions. Sadashivanagar, Jayanagar and Raj Mahal Extension may sound alien to their ears, accustomed as they are to 'Nagarathpet', 'Tharagupet', 'Chickpet', and 'Doddapet'.

This hoary nucleus of the city retains an indescribable charm, although the architecture may look outdated, and one's passage at first may appear hazardous through its traffic, but actually the wheels steer off within a hair's breadth and spare the pedestrian's toes, who must survive by lightly leaping aside, and recovering his balance from

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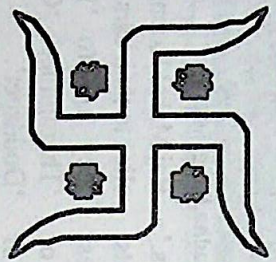

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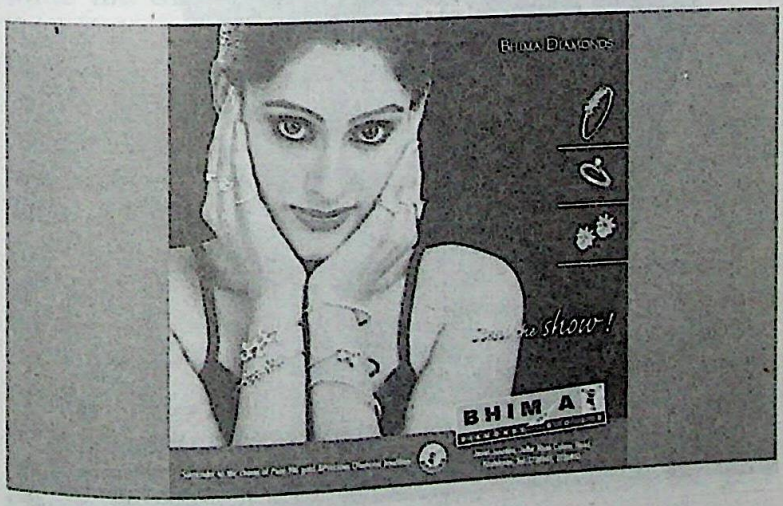
the very edge of the granite pavement, and may not suffer more than an occasional jab from a cycle handle or a bump from its mudguard as crack-riders dash past, weaving their way through. Here the shops may look unsophisticated, being mostly without glossy counters, glazed windows, or furniture, except a desk for the proprietor at the entrance, but you could get anything and everything you may desire within this ancient perimeter (crowned by the magnificent Krishnarajendra market), if you stand on the threshold, catch someone's eyes and make your demands clearly heard over other people's demands and general conversation.

Anything and everything including a full regalia with sparkling crown and robes for an emperor in a court scene for a theatrical production, and also false hair, beards, lace-caps, and masks. A whole row of them I had seen some years ago; although on a recent visit, I could not locate those shops, as they



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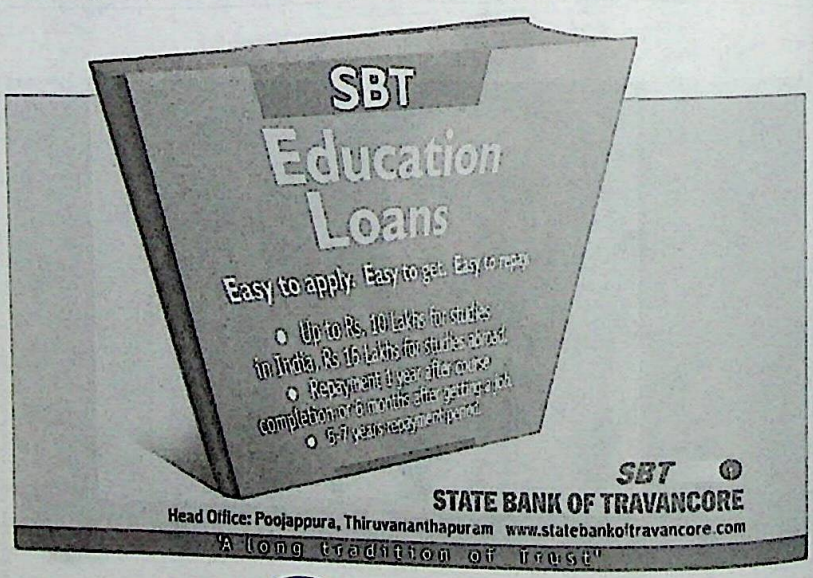
seemed to have got hemmed between watch-repairs and automobile spares and tinkers.

A section of the city where you can hear statements such as:" 'Winston Churchill lived here', or 'We were suppliers of cigars to Churchill', or 'Duke of Wellington's descendants have always ordered their shoes from us. They are still sending us Christmas greetings.'

One can hear such claims in and around Commercial Street or Brigade Road or Russel Market, which prospered in the days when this part of the city was very much anglicized, being occupied by British or Anglo-Indian officials and military personnel.

This part of the city enjoyed a topographical caste superiority at one time, being a 'Cantonment' area distinct from the 'City', which was 'Native'. Even today certain streets and areas retain their British associations, such as Richmond Town, Cox Town, Lavalle Road, Fraser Town, St. Marks, Kensington, Johnson Market and



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so forth. I fervently hope that some zealot will not think of changing them but appreciate their historical flavour; - at least to honour the memory of men and women who set forth from far off Britain in those days with dreams of a flourishing career in the 'Orient' and sadly enough, laid their bones in Bangalore soil. I visited an old cemetery in the Cantonment, in order to look for the grave of a soldier, who was court-martialled and shot for indiscipline, the said act of indiscipline being nothing more than quaffing a glass of water, while the Commandant had ordered the company to drink only beer.

The soldier had no taste for beer (or any alcohol) and had to face death-penalty for it. In that forest of tombstones, overgrown with weeds and thicker, I could not find this particular grave of one who was forbidden to drink water, perhaps, as a protection against cholera, but could to escape death anyway. The inscriptions over the tombs have a harrowing tale to tell of men, women and children, who could not survive the Indian climate or conditions of those days, and seemed to have come thousands of miles only to die. In addition to Smiths and Ogilvys, Captains, Lieutenants, or Corporals, dead in their thirties, their wives passed away mostly in their twenties or even less and the children never lived beyond ten, and infants aged a few days. In the early eighteenth century, before the discovery of inoculations and antibiotics, when pneumonia, dysentery or malaria struck, there could be no hope of survival. I noticed in a whole row, an entire family wiped out by cholera.

Bangalore has been essentially a centre of scientific, technological and research activities. The old palace of the Maharaja, I learn, is to be converted into a Museum of Living Science, which will concentrate in one place, exhibits of permanent value for experts and students alike.

Sir M. Visvesvaraya whose vision and practical genius gave

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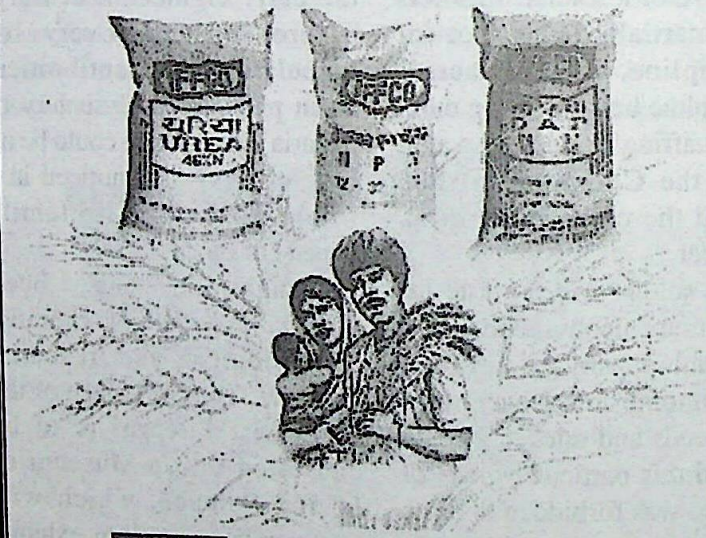

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shape to modern Karnataka in its civic, industrial, and engineering fields, lived and died in Bangalore, a centenarian, active to the last in the pursuit of his ideal of modernizing Karnataka. The Industrial Museum at the Cubbon Park stands as a tribute to the memory of this rare and unique personality.

Mysore has been classified technically as a 'backward' area, and inducements are being offered for the starting of industries, so as to bring it up to modern standards, freed from the background of a traditional agricultural economy that dominated it for centuries. The patronage of the Palace was also there, keeping alive art and culture, and several elegant professions such as those of perfumers, ivory or sandalwood carvers, and florists.

Mysoreans cherish their festivals: Yugadi, Ramanavami, Deepavali and Dasara. On the eve of every festival, you will find Sayyaji Rao Road and the city-market gates impenetrable. Money and economic motives seem to recede in the background at such times, as all work slows down a day before, ceases for a couple of days, and makes a tardy start all over again as the festive hangover lingers.

The festive temperament is more marked in Mysore than anywhere else. Any industrialist who starts an enterprise in Mysore has to reckon on this psychology, if he is not to despair later.

But no damage is actually done as work, somehow, is resumed and goes on everywhere, factories turn out their products, house-building activities continue, and plumbers and electricians attend to the repairs sooner or later.

To equate Mysore with an industrial city, such as Bangalore, would be inapt. Those totally dedicated to Bangalore life, find it hard to spend more than a day in Mysore. After a tourist round of visits to the zoo, the temple on the Chamundi Hill, the Palace, Bird Sanctuary, Tippu's fort, and the Sandal Oil and Silk Factories,

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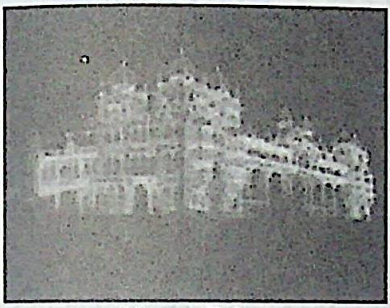

Mysore Palace

and an evening spent amidst the colourful fountains of Brindavan, they feel that their business is over, and they have nothing further to do as the city has to offer, normally, nothing more by way of entertainment or engagement. However, there are also certain seasons of first-class sporting events, such as football, cricket, basketball, and so on which attract the youth.

But the largest draw is often wrestling bouts in Doddakere, watched by milling crowds at weekend. Mysore still maintains in every part of the city its 'Garadi', with red-striped walls, within which are located wrestling clubs, which maintain the orthodox wrestling traditions, and draw out in challenge champions from all parts of the country—Punjab down to Cape Comorin.

The quality of life that Mysore offers is unique. The atmosphere is placid and poetic, and one is constantly tempted to enjoy the moment setting aside all other thoughts.

Not only the festivals but certain seasons of pilgrimages are compulsive. Mysore city's original nucleus has been a number of villages-the three *Koppals*, Padavarhalli, Kesare, and Asokapuram, which supply the bulk of workers for our factories, fields, gardens and public works, and also artisans, and mechanics.

But these are the very ones to be seen marching down the street on a pilgrimage to Mahadeswara Hills during Sivarathri and Yugadi, a trip of over one hundred miles to and fro, each member carrying a bamboo staff, ready to walk through dense forests, with faith at heart and no kind of fear, the air echoing with shouts of 'Jai' to the God they are out to visit.

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Mysore offers certain special delicacies for the connoisseur in food. The 'Nanjangud Plantain' with a flavour unknown to other varieties- there are enthusiasts who would go miles to attain the 'Nanjangud', tiny, golden, rather hard-looking but absolutely ambrosial to the taste; this particular brand is gradually vanishing before the commercially cultivated imitation, but still there are one or two places known only to the expert, where it is available—a small corner shop Old Agrahar, from whose ceiling bunches of 'Nanjangud' hang, where you just ask for it and not stoop to discuss the price, and it will be packed up for you with the advice, 'Keep it for a day and then eat', and you depart without further ado: and then a shop at the city market, where you should not ask. 'Is this the real "Nanjangud"?'-because he won't keep it otherwise.

And then follow the master if you like to find other delicacies such as Hurigalu (spiced, parched gram), Kobri Mittai, Masala Dosai and 'Set Dosa' (the last served only in sets of four with Chutney)-these may not be immediately available anywhere and everywhere, but under expert guidance, one can attain them in modest-looking eating corners.

It is not all festivals and fine weather, and special food. Mysore has a background of academic life-it is essentially a University town.

Oriental Research Institute containing rare books and manuscripts, the colleges of engineering, medicine, Ayurveda, and Sanskrit, besides the arts colleges spread over the city, have a student population of over 20,000.

Manasa Gangotri-a name coined by the poet K. V. Puttappa- at the western end of the city on a ground of 300 acres, with its own buildings, and hostels and other amenities, is a world by itself, where postgraduate studies in science, humanities and commerce, and research in Kannada language and literature, are pursued.

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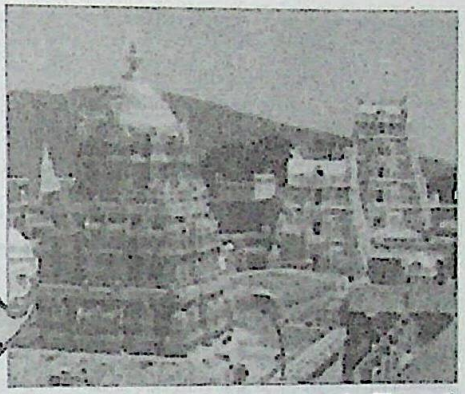
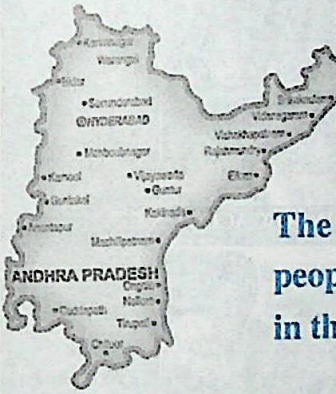
Andhra Pradesh

Temples and Spirituality

P. N. Santhanagopal



Lord Venkateswara temple, Tirupati



The home of the Telugu speaking people possesses a priceless heritage in the form of its temples.

Andhra Pradesh, the state that triggered off the formation of States of India on the basis of language and the home of the Telugu speaking people, possesses a priceless heritage in the form of its temples. They are an irresistible draw together with other spots of tourist interest.

Among them are the many attractions of Hyderabad, Golkonda famed for its once rich diamond mines, Gandipet, Warrangal, Nizam Nagar, Kuntla Water Falls, Ettiothala Water Falls, Undavalli caves, Horsley Hills, Araku Valley and Borra caves, to mention only a few.

The greatest draw of this picturesque state, undoubtedly are however its temples, each with its hoary traditions and the myths associated with them.

Among the rulers who caused these temples to built were the

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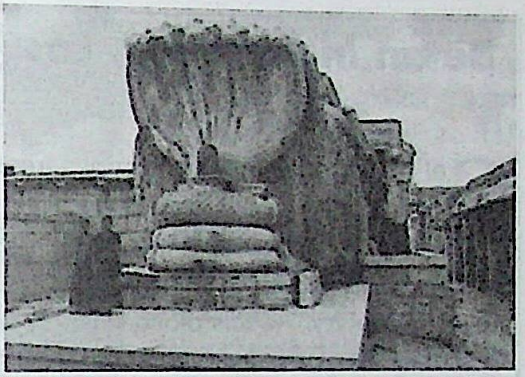
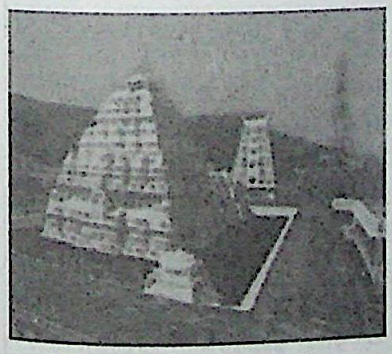
Sathavahanas of the first century. Some of the remains of their contributions can be seen near Guntur. The Iksvakus who followed them had built temples at Nagarjunakonda, which came to light when excavations were carried out there.



The monolithic Nagalinga at Lepaksh temple. It is situated at distance of about 11 kms from Hindupur.

The temple at Tirumala at Tirupati, abode of Lord Venkateswara and the Kalahastheeswara temple at Kahalasthi, of Lord Siva, belong to the pre-christian era. The shrine of Lord Venkateswara at Tirumala, Tirupati, is the richest temple in the country. Thousands of pilgrims throng the temple day after day round the year. About three kilometers away from the shrine is the Akasa Ganga. Priests carry water from it for the daily *pooja* at the shrine of Lord Venkateswara.



The shrine at Simhachalam

A bath at Akasa Ganga and also at the Swami Pushkarini which is close to the shrine are a must for every pilgrim. There is a shrine for Lord Vishnu in his incarnation of Varaha which is situated on one end of the Swami Pushkarini. It is believed that it had existed even before the shrine of Lord Venkateswara came into being.

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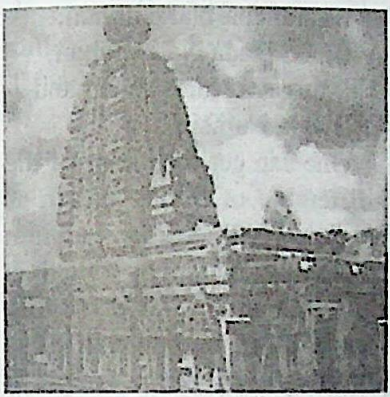

Alampur temple

At Kalahasthi, the temple of Lord Kalahastheeswara is an important shrine of Lord Siva. Special *poojas* are performed in this temple to ward off the evil effects of presence of Mangal *griha*, the Mars planet, especially in the horoscopes of girls. It is believed that the presence of this planet in the eighth house delays the marriage of girls and propitiatory prayers performed here is believed to negate the ill effect of this combination of planets in a girl's horoscope.

The famed Alampur Brahma Temples were built by the Chalukyas of Badami (Karnataka) during the 6th century. These temples are excellent examples of Chalukyan art and sculpture. The Vengi Chalukyas ruled coastal Andhra Pradesh from the 7th to 11th centuries.

The Badami chalukyas were succeeded by the Rashtrakutas and the later Chalukyas. The Kakatias who ruled from Warrangal from the 11th to 14th centuries constructed beautiful temples that display sculptural excellence and artistry.

The temples at Simhachalam and Mukhalingam in the north-eastern region of Andhra Pradesh show some influence of Orissa style of architecture. However the largest patrons of temple architecture were the rulers of the Vijayanagaram empire. One should specially mention the temples at Srisailam and Lepakshi which received their patronage in abundance.

Some of the temples of Andhra Pradesh have benefited from the munificence of the Cholas and Pallavas of Tamilnadu, apart from the Chalukyas , the eastern Gangas and the Vijayanagar kings. Alwar

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saints have sung hymns about Tirupati and Ahobhilam temples and the Saivite Nayanmar saints have sung the glories of Sri Sailam and Sri Kalahasthi, two of the famed shrines of Lord Siva.

Alampur, near Karnool, houses the Navabhrama temples. These temples are located inside a courtyard on the left bank of the river Tungabhadra.

The rivers Tungabhadra and Krishna are in confluence near Alampur. The Nava Bramma temples are dedicated to lord Siva. These temples are believed to have been built by the Badami Chalukya kings. Also to be found within the enclosure together with the Nava Bramma temples is the temple for Suryanarayana.

Andhra Pradesh is also famed for its temples for Lord Narasimha. There are nine temples, like the Nava Bramma temples. These are

Ahobhila Narasimhan,
Varaha Narasimhan,
Malola Narasimhan,
Yogananda Narasimhan
Bharana Narasimhan,
Kaarancha Narasimhan,
Chakravada Narasimhan,
Bhargava Narasimhan and
Jwala Narasimhan.

One can get a glimpse of the hill temple of Simhachalam as one travels to Vishakapatnam from Vizianagaram by train. It is situated at a distance of 18 kilo metres from Visakhapatnam. The presiding deity of the temple is Varaha Lakshmi Narasimha. This temple combines the Orissa and Chalukyan styles of temple construction.

Among the illustrious groups of temples of Andhrapradesh are the Pancharama shrines. A legend connects these temples to the destruction of the demon Tarakasura by lord Skanda. Tarakasura carried in his throat a Siva Linga and when he was killed the Linga fell down and was broken into five pieces. The spots where the five pieces fell became the Pancharama kshetras.

A unique feature of the Siva Lingams worshipped in these shrines as also at Bhimavaram is the fact that they are all thin, tall

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lingams. The biggest or rather tallest of the five *lingams* is a fifteen feet long white marble *lingam* worshipped as Amareswara at Amaravati temple. The *lingam* at Draksharama temple is ten feet long.

The temple at Sri Sailam is a saivite shrine, housing one of the famed jyotir lingas. The presiding deities are Lord Mallikarjuna and his divine consort Mother Bhramaramba Devi. The mother is so called because , as the legend has it, she chose to assume the form of a bee and chose to remain there to worship the Lord.

Some of the other noteworthy temples in Andhrapradesh are the Ramappa temple at Palampet near Warrangal and the famed thousand pillar Hanumankonda temple, both believed to have been built by the Kakadia kings. The Yoga Narasimha temple is located at Dharmapuri in Karimnagar district. The deity there is also known as Sowmya Narasimha.

The city of Vijayawada has three important temples, Kanakadurga temple, Malleswarara temple and Vijayeswara temple. Kanaka Durga Devi resides in her aspect as Sakthi. Adi Sankara Bhagavadpada is believed to

Narasimha at Ahobhilam

have visited this temple and to have installed a Sri Chakra. The Siva Lingam at Malleswara temple is believed to have been installed by the sage Agasthya. According to legend, the

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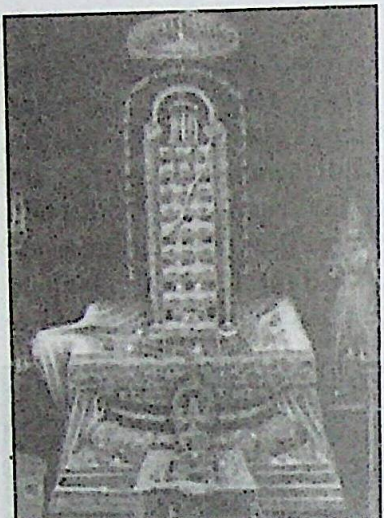
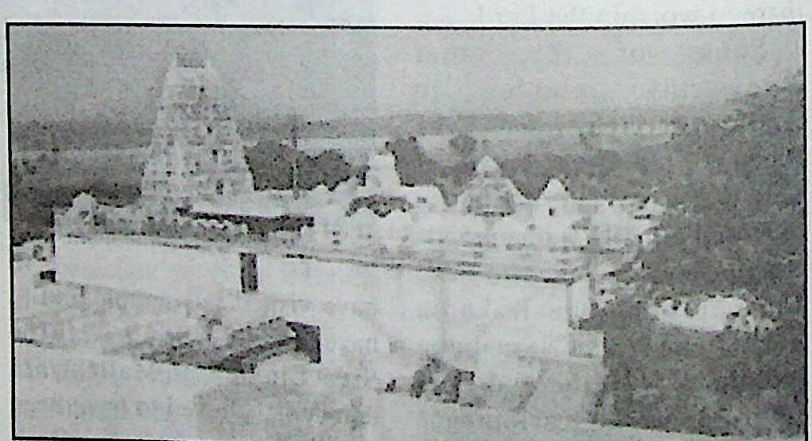


Sri Kalahastheeswara at Kalahasti

Vijayeswara temple is believed to have been founded by the Pandava prince Arjuna.

The Bhadrachalam temple at Bhadrachalam which is about 200 kilo metres from Vijayawada is linked closely with Bhadrachalam Ramadasa who was known as Gopanna. It appears he had utilized money from the government treasury to the tune of about six lakhs and had constructed the temple. He was incarcerated in prison.

Lord Sri Rama is believed to have paid the money into the treasury and had a receipt issued by the King. The awed king immediately released Gopanna and reinstated him as Tahsildar the post he held. He



The famous Bhadrachalam temple with river Godhavari at a distance.

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Mangalagir temple at foot hills

also made generous donations to the temple. The great Rama devotee Sant Kabirdas visited this temple and was first refused permission to enter and it was found that the deities had disappeared from the sanctum sanctorum. When he was permitted to enter, the deities miraculously reappeared.

We owe a great debt to the Southern regions for preserving the priceless heritage. The Krishna Yajurveda Samhita, in fact, that has been passed down orally from generation to generation. Its greatest codifiers Boudhayana and Apasthamba are believed to belong to this region. In Andhra Pradesh one can still see the ancient traditions still be kept vibrantly alive.

To a large extent this is happening in several of the ancient magnificent temples of Andhra Pradesh.

SWEET THOUGHT

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I AM THE SWEET FRAGRANCE OF THE EARTH AND THE HEAT IN THE FIRE; THE LIFE IN ALL BEINGS, THE AUSTERITY IN ASCETICS.

- Bhagavad Gita

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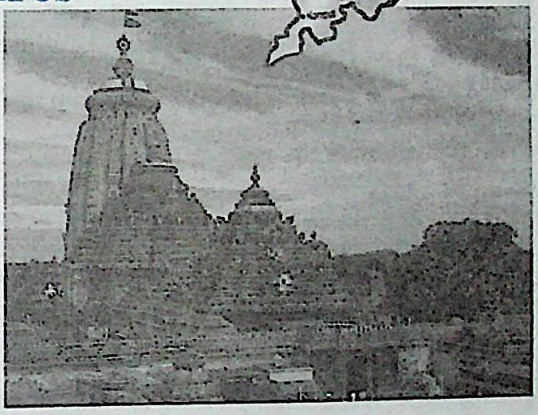
Orissa

Blend of Hindu, Buddhist and Jain Cultures

Rath yatra invites huge crowds and is a colourful festival



Jagannath Puri Temple

Orissa has a checkered history which has assimilated and synthesised the best of Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain cultures. Orissa or Kalinga as it was then called was a settlement of non-Aryan and Aryan settlers. It was a formidable empire with trading routes stretching up to Bali, Sumatra, Indonesia and Java.

It was here that the famous Battle of Kalinga was fought in 261 BC, which made the Mauryan King Ashoka forsake war. He became a follower of Buddhism and spread the spirit of ahimsa and peace, the message of Buddhism, to Sri Lanka and the Far East, Exquisite remains of the Buddhist past still remain in the areas of Udaygiri, Lalitagiri and Ratnagiri.

Kharavela, who came to power in Kalinga, around 1st Century BC, was a staunch

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follower of Jainism. It is to this period that Orissa owes its Jain art and architectural tradition.

During the 7th to the 13th Century AD, Orissa flourished. Trade and commerce increased and along with it evolved its art and architecture. The style of Hindu temple construction, so unique to Orissa also developed around this time.

Orissan temples have beautiful decorations, exquisite carving and ornamentation covering the area with Gods & Goddesses, kings and queens, animals and flower motifs. Orissa is probably the only state where one can study temple architecture in all its successive stages of development.

Odissi, is the traditional dance form of Orissa and probably owes its origin to the temple dances of the *devadasis* (temple dancers). Possibly the oldest classical dance form, it is very graceful.

Orissa has a rich tradition of tribal and folk dances as well. Chhau from Mayurbhanj District is a martial dance form reminiscent of Orissa's earlier maritime tradition.

The green coconut and the abundant sea food from Chilika lake and the sea are as Orissan as pizzas are Italian. Delicious prawns, crabs, sweet water fish, lamb, chicken and eggs cooked by Orissan cooks are gourmet fares. Pithas, sweet and savoury are domestic preparations loved by the Orissans.

Orissa is a modern state with an ethnic past that is still vibrant. Most of her tribes are to be found in the districts of Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar Phulbani, Sambalpur, Kalahandi and Koraput. As many as 62 tribes exist in Orissa - Kondhs, Koyas, Bondas, Gadabas, Santals, Juangs, Oraon, to name only a few are some important tribes which have retained their individuality and their close bond with nature.

Bhubaneshwar is known as the Temple City of The East (Bhuban being world and Iswar God) and it is a walk down centuries of temple architecture,

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With 600 temples still extant, temples are to this ancient city as forts are to Rajasthan. It is probably the only city in the world that enables an authentic over-view of the stages of development of Hindu religious architecture.

These temples are a reminder of the splendour, the heritage that was once India. Regular dances by the 'Devadasis' or divine servant girls, rituals and rites, recital of hymns were all integral part of temple culture.

Temples in Bhubaneshwar are built on a common plan as prescribed by Hindu norms. The structure is divided into four parts . The outer chamber is the 'Jagamohana'. The Garbhagriha is the inner sanctum sanctorum of the presiding deity. There is also a conical beehive shaped tower which forms the third part – the Nata Mandap and the fourth is the Bhoga Mandap.

All visible parts of a temple are sculpted with motifs of priests, kings, courtiers, pilgrims, celestial dancers, couples in embrace, birds, animals or scenes from religious epics and legends.

Dhauligiri (8 km) has Ashokan edicts carved on rocks. These date back to 2nd century BC. Udaygiri, Khandagiri (8 km) have a series of cave temples

Bhuvanesvar

Bhuvanesvar is known as the city of temples and shrines. Tradition says that around the lake there were 7,000 shrines of which about a hundred alone are now extant. But what remains reveals the wonderful art of Orissa.

Tradition says that those who intend to have the Yatra of Lord Jagannath should first visit this Ekamra Tirtha and then proceed along to Jagannath Puri. It is said that even Shri Chaitanya first had the Darsana of Lord Lingaraja before he went to Puri and that without this prior Darsana the Yatra of Puri is futile.

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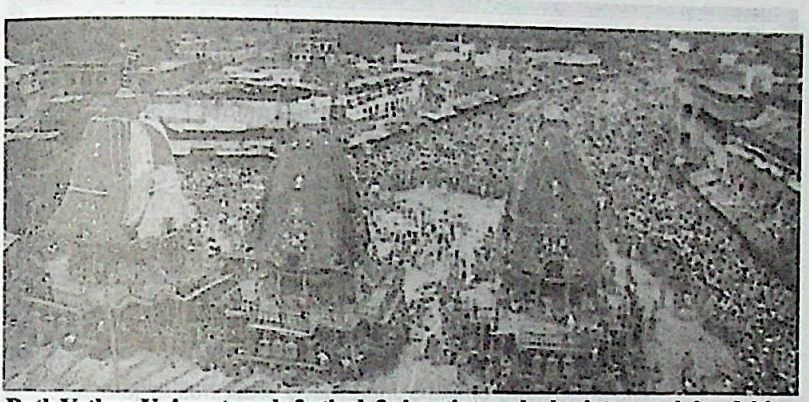

Rath Yathra: Unique temple festival; 3 gigantic temple chariots containing deities – Jagannath, Balabhadra – brothers & sister Subhadra, taken in procession watched by huge number of devotees.

belonging to the Hindu and Jain faiths.

Nandan Kanan Zoo (25 km) for viewing the Royal Bengal Tiger and white tigers. Chandipur (16 km) is a seaside resort with one of the finest beaches in Orissa. Pipli (29 km) is a village famous for its appliqué work, originally only made for the temple Gods. Atri Springs (42 km) has sulphur springs and the famous Hatakeshwara Temple. Sun Temple, Konark (65 km) is a magnificent 13th century temple visualized as the chariot of the Sun God, as he glides through the firmament from dawn to dusk. The ruins have sculptures detailing human life.

Seven kms from Bhubaneshwar are the twin hills of Udaygiri and Khandagiri. Built by Kharavela around 1st - 2nd Century BC for Jain monks, they are excellent examples of Jain Cave art. The famous caves of Hathigumpha (elephant cave) in Udaygiri, Rani Gumpha (Queen's cave) also in Udaygiri, with upper and lower storeys, spacious courtyards and delicately designed friezes bear witness to the

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KOTI ARCHANA TO KANCHI PARAMACHARYA ATHISHTANAM FOR GLOBAL WELFARE:

AN APPEAL

Sri C.S. Prakasa Rao, Chairman, Sri Sankara Bhaktha jana Sabha Trust, has issued the following appeal:

The sri sankara Bhaktha Jana sabha Trust has organised a KOTI ARCHANA at Sri Kanchi Sankara Mutt Sri Mahaswamy Athishtanam, No.1, Salai Street, Kancheepuram 631 502 in March 2005 to coincide with the 112th Jayanthi of His Holiness the Pramacharya of Kanchi.

The Sabha was started in the year 1967 to work in the field of religion with special reference to vedic studies.

Devotees may kindly send their contributions by Crossed A/c, Payee Cheque or Demand Draft drawn in favour of

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for One Laksharchana	Rs.	100/-

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sophistication the architectural styles had attained as early as the first Century BC.

The seat of Lord Jagannath, Site of renowned Rathyatra Festival and one of the most popular sea side resorts on the Bay of Bengal, Puri is an ideal travel destination all the year round.

Here one can see the Shri Jagannath Temple, Daria Hanuman and Sonar Gouranga Temples, Gundicha Char, Indradyumma Tank, Narendra/ Chandan Tank, Loknath Temple, Swarga Dwar, Sea Beach at Puri.

Renowned for its magnificent sun temple, which was constructed by Narasinha Deva of Ganga dynasty of Orissa in mid 13th century, Konark is also a lovely beach resort. It is easily approachable from Bhubaneshwar-64 kms and Puri-32 kms.

In Konark, the "Natya Mandir", the dance hall of the Sun Temple probably remains as the last remnant of the glorious temples of Orissa an

KONARAK

The sculptures of Konarak are exquisitely cut. The various figures of men, animals, foliage and intricate patterns are executed with "a degree of taste, propriety and freedom'x which would stand a comparison with some of our best specimens of Gothic architectural ornaments. The work-manship, too, remains as perfect as if it had just come from the chisel of the sculptor, owing to the extreme hardness and durability of the stone (Stirling). The Navagrahas are very finely sculptured. Huge elephants crouch in terror under rampant lions, while mutilated human figures lie crushed beneath the flat pulpy feet of the elephants. Clubmen, griffins, warriors on prancing horses, colossal figures of grotesque and varied shape, stand about in silent stony groups.

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example of the architectural excellence of the times. Built in the 13th Century, a huge image of the chariot of the Sun, drawn by seven horses and 24 wheels symbolises the divisions of time. The main tower of Konark stood as high as 227 feet, superceding both Lingaraja and Jagannath Temples. The Jagmohana (Porch) structure and the tower are both situated atop the stone platform supporting the 24 wheels. The Konark Sun Temple also houses a Natamandira or dancing hall.

Only two subsidiary temples out of the 22, that were also situated inside the temple precincts, exist today.

The Sun Temple standing in solitary splendour is the relic of a great past. History lovers can regale themselves at the Archaeological Museum at the site of the Konark Sun Temple. The majestic Sun Temple silhouetted against the setting sun remains indelibly etched in the spectator's memory.

Chilika Lake, spreading over an area of 1100 sq. kms is the largest brackish water lake in the country and attracts large number of migratory birds besides resident ones. Barkul and Rambha are two places on the lake which serve as the base.

The lake with several of its islands, main among them being, Kalijai, Nalabana, Honeymoon, Breakfast islands etc are places of interest. To visit islands, particularly, Kalijai and Nalabana as well as to cruise on the Chilika Lake, motorised yatch and speed boat services are available.

Read **'Vedic Records on Early Aryans'** by L. N. Renu & **'Indian Ancestors of Vedic Aryans'** by L. N. Renu. Also read "Musings on The Bhagwad Gita" by Nehal Chand Vaish. Published by Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, Kulapati Munshi Marg, Mumbai-400 007.

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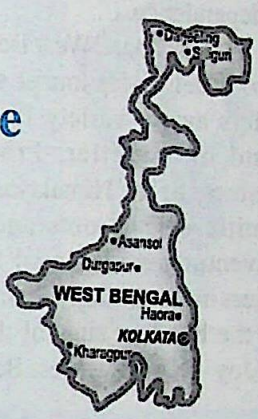
West Bengal



Abode of Kali, Tagore and Paramhansa

Shoma Mittra

Belur Math, the headquarters of the Ramakrishna Mission, the famous Kali temple at Dakshineshwar and the Calcutta Memorial are the main attractions.

West Bengal is one of the most intriguingly captivating states of our country. Not only is it the cultural capital of India but in many ways it is synonymous with change, upheaval and renaissance.

It is the state which has produced three of the India's five Nobel Laureates – Tagore, Mother Teresa, and Amartya Sen. It was once the high seat of the British Empire and later it gave us men of intellectual thought and freedom – like Vivekananda, Vidyasagar and Raja Ram Mohan Roy – that

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propelled the country towards independence.

History apart, West Bengal is also a delightful tourist spot. It offers ample variety for every kind of traveller. From the vastness of the Himalayas to the limitless sea fronts and from adventures with Royal Bengal tigers in the swampy Sunderbans to the bustling sites of the City of Joy – Kolkata, West Bengal is a traveller's delight.

Dum Dum Airport and Howrah are the two points of entry to Kolkata via air and rail routes. The state of West Bengal has 18 districts and Kolkata which was known as Calcutta until recently serves as the capital. The largest cities are Calcutta, Howrah, Asansol, Durgapur, and Siliguri; while Darjeeling, Kharagpur and

Belur Math

Sprawling over several acres of land on the western banks of the river Hooghly (Ganga), it is a place of pilgrimage for people from all over the world, professing different religious faiths. Even people not interested in religion come here for the peace it exudes. Sanctified by Swami Vivekananda, and several other illumined monks, the Belur Math premises include the main monastery, several temples and the Headquarters of the twin organizations of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. The Ramakrishna Order stands as a symbol of the eternal truths of religion tested and embodied by Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda and their message of harmony of religions, divinity of the soul, renunciation and service.

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The Bauls are mystic singers, wandering minstrels who preserve one of the oldest and fascinating Indian tradition. Born from the meeting of different religious expressions, such as Tantrism, Buddhism, Sufism, Vaishnavism they consecrate their existence to dance, music and singing, conveying intimate joy, universal brotherhood, discovering of divine in man's heart.

Haldia are some other important towns. The state shares international boundaries with Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan.

Although the capital city is only a little over 300 years old, West Bengal is steeped in a 5000-year-old history. Its history has been traced back to the Gupta dynasty and later the Pala dynasty.

Its later history represented the power struggle between the gradually declining Mughal empire and the establishment of the East India Company and assertion of British rule.

The Howrah Bridge (built between 1937 and 1943) which is a marvel of engineering is a cantilever bridge that has stood the test of time and Bengalis are as proud of it as the Parisians are of their Eiffel Tower. It is said to be the busiest road bridge in the world.

The Howrah Bridge which stands over the Ganga connects the city of Kolkata to Hoogly .

The powerful and majestic Ganga flows stately through the lands in the last leg of its journey to meet the Bay of Bengal. Descending from the Himalayas

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and taking various forms and names the mighty river revered by all Indians is called the Hoogly (one of the many distributaries that Ganga divides itself into) as it enters West Bengal. Any visitor to West Bengal is awed and humbled by the majestic presence of this mighty river which flows under the Howrah Bridge.

The Botanical Gardens which boasts of some of the oldest and rarest species of flora in the world is in Howrah.

At the centre of Kolkata is the Victoria Memorial which is a landmark made during the British Raj by Sir William Emerson in honour of Queen Victoria. It was opened in 1921 by the Prince of Wales. It is an impressive white marble building often called the Taj Mahal of the British Raj. Inside are memorabilia of British India.

A few hundred meters away from the Victoria Memorial and its lush green surroundings is the racecourse and the Alipore Zoo.

A nice drive away from the city down the Diamond Harbour road will bring you to one of the world's largest deltas – the Sundarbans which have been formed by the confluence of three rivers – the Ganga, Brahmaputra and the Meghna.

The river estuaries of the Bay of Bengal from a unique environment, one that is naturally adaptable as a wildlife habitat. In this 'forest by the sea' with its dense growths of mangrove, the Project Tiger reserve constitutes 2,58,477.20 hectares. The Sunderbans extends into Bangladesh too. This is the world's largest estuarine sanctuary which is covered with densely forested islands and saline water channels.

It is home to the fast declining Royal Bengal Tigers and spotted deer, wild pigs, monkeys, kingfishers, herons and white – bellied eagles. The Sundarbans got its name from the 'sundari' trees which are found here in abundance. The Sundarbans which are a must for any tourist to West Bengal shares it boundaries with Sajnekhali , a bird sanctuary.

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If you can fill

the unforgiving minute

With sixty seconds'

worth of distance run,

Yours is the earth and

every thing that's in it,

And-which is more-you'll be a man,

my son!

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Botanical Gardens are an impressive oasis of green trees and plants especially noted for its gigantic over 200-year-old banyan tree.

No visit to West Bengal will be complete without mentioning two other places which must feature on every tourist's itinerary. One is the Shantiniketan and Vishwabharati - the open-air education centre started by Rabindranath Tagore and the other is the magnificent hill station, Darjeeling.

The natural charm of Shantiniketan draws many a visitor. Here Tagore envisioned a center of learning which would have the best of both the east and the west. Open-air education as opposed to being cloistered in the four walls of a classroom became a reality here.

Bengali people are known for their love of literature, Rabindranth Tagore, Sharat Chandra, Bengali sweets, lovely

Kali Temple, Dakshineshwar

Dedicated to Goddess Kali, the Dakshineshwar Temple is situated to the north of Kolkata, a place where Ramakrishna Paramhansa, the spiritual guru of Swami Vivekananda, lived most of his life. Rani Rashmoni built the temple in 1847. The temple comprises of three parts. Of these, the smallest is dedicated to Lord Vishnu. The most beautiful shrine adjacent to it houses the renowned idol of the Goddess Kali. Structurally, the temple is set on a platform in a vast courtyard, which is encircled by a band of blood-red paint. Opposite to this building, along the riverbanks, are situated five identical temples. The Dakshineshwar Kali Temple is a popular tourist place.

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cotton sarees and confidence.

Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong make up the 3 hill states of this beautiful abode from where one can get a breathtaking view of the Himalayas.

The journey to Darjeeling from New Jalpaiguri on the famous miniature railway is a superb experience. It is a rare experience of travel on a 2ft gauge railway at 15km per hour.

Mark Twain is said to have said of Darjeeling, " The one land that all men desire to see, and having seen once by even a glimpse would not give that glimpse for the shows of the rest of the world combined." Little wonder then that it is called the " Queen of the Himalayas".

West Bengal has much more to offer than one can include in any short article. To get the feel and depth of the Bengalis one must walk among the crowded lanes of Baghbazar or make a trip to rural Bengal where the greenery and freshness is spellbinding. A trip to West Bengal will always leave you wanting for more ...

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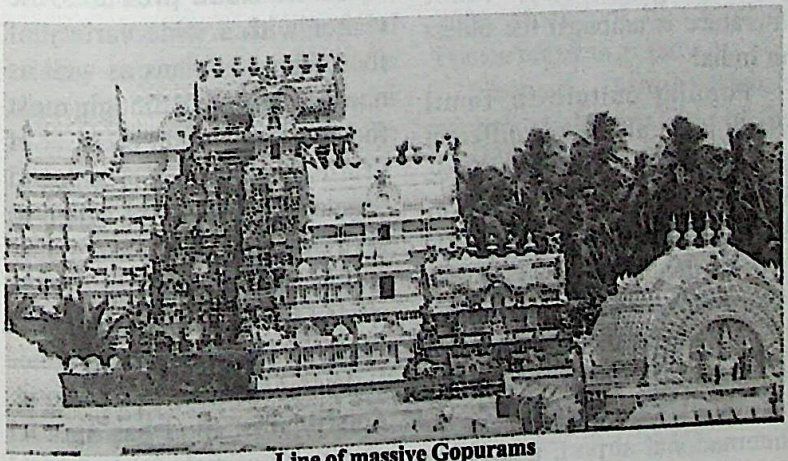
Tamil Nadu

India's Eastern Gateway

No conquerers from outside India ever came to conquer Tamil Nadu. It is ethnically Indian

For a long time after independence, people living north of the Vindhyas thought South India meant Tamil Nadu and a South Indian a Madrasi !

Tamil Nadu is a beautiful state nestling in the southern Indian peninsula, on the shores of the Bay of Bengal and the deep blue Indian Ocean. It is a good combination of tropical climate,



Line of massive Gopurams

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High Court complex with towering minarets with ornamented domes and sculptured pillars that once housed Madras' lighthouse, 175 ft above sea level.

cooler hill resorts, ancient culture, and friendly people making it an ideal holiday destination

Tamilians are avid readers, and there is a vibrant magazine publishing industry. Tamil literature is amongst the oldest in India!

Popular culture in Tamil Nadu is an altogether different pot of sambar. The creative force of the people has led to one of the largest film industries in the world, producing movies and film songs for several decades.

Chennai is the most suitable point of entry for visitors to the south of India as it has an international airport, a sea port and good train and bus links to almost all major towns of India. Tamil Nadu is a Hindu stronghold whose past merges into the present. South India has been free from foreign invasions and there is hardly any foreign touch here. People are generally very devotional and it is no wonder that there are temples with towering spires called *gopurams* which are a common feature and they have been the fulcrum of society. Art forms that originated in religious worship continue even today.Tamilnadu is famous for Bharat Natyam, the splendid dance form.

Tamil Nadu provides the visitor with a wide variety of food for vegetarians as well as non-vegetarians, though most food in Tamil Nadu consists of grains, lentils, rice and vegetables. Spices are added to give a distinctive taste.

Chettinad cuisine is a speciality in Tamil Nadu and is a delight for those who like hot and spicy non-vegetarian food. This type of food has several variations of fish, mutton, and

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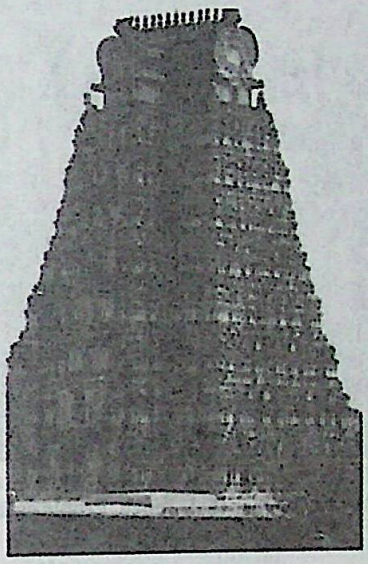
chicken dishes of which the Chettinad Pepper Chicken is a speciality.

Tamil Nadu, especially Chennai, is famous for its filter coffee as most Tamils have a subtle contempt for instant coffee. The making of filter coffee is almost a ritual, for the coffee beans have to be first roasted and then ground. The powder is put into a filter set and boiling hot water is added to prepare the decoction and allowed to set for about 15 minutes. The decoction is then added to milk with sugar to taste. The final drink is poured from one container to another in rapid succession to make the ideal frothy cup of filter coffee. The last process makes one wonder whether the brew could be bought by the yard!

Mahabalipuram, Kanchipuram, Tiruchirapalli, Madurai and Thanjavur are temple towns. The first with its wealth of sculptures is an excellent sea resort while Kanchipuram is famous for its lovely colourful silk sarees.



Gopuram of Srirangam temple

Pondicherry is a French colony where French is still spoken, and it has cobbled streets, seaside villas which look like South of France rather than India.

Chennai, Tamil Nadu's capital has Marina, one of the finest beaches of Asia. The city was founded at Fort St George in 1640 A.D. by Francis Day of the East India Company. Fort St George, St Mary's Church,

Gandhi *mandapam*, Kapaleeswara temple, Marina Beach, Parthasarthy temple, Santhome Cathedral, and

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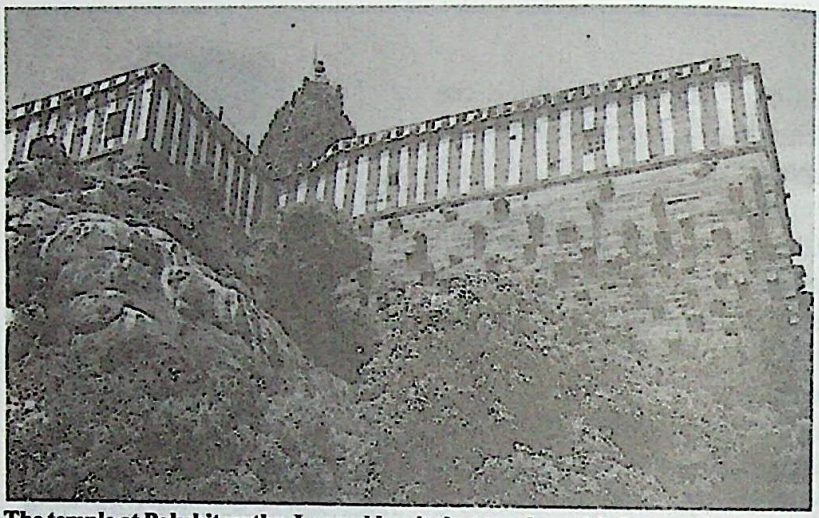

The temple at Pakshiteertha-Legend has it that two huge birds come here every day for having their lunch. People gather here to see them

Valluvarkotttam are some of the places to visit in Chennai while one can go to Vedanthangal bird sanctuary(85 kms), Mahabalipuram(61kms), Cholamandal artists' village(20 kms), Kanchipuram(71kms) are excursion sites from here.

Mamallapuram (Mahabalipuram) is famous for the beaches, the magnificent monuments hewn out of rock, Mahishasurmardhini cave, and other places. Kanchipuram is the capital of the Pallava dynasty and is one of the seven most sacred cities of India. Temples like Kailashnath, Shri Varadaraja, Shri Kamakshi are the major shrines in this city of over 100 temples.

30 kms from Chingleput is the famous bird sanctuary Vedanthangal where migratory birds are a bird lover's delight.

Rajaraja Chola, the empire builder. built the famous Brihadeeswara temple at Thanjavur(Tanjore) in the early Dravidian style. Ranganatha Temple at Srirangam is at Tiruchirapally(Trichy) on the banks of the river Cauvery. Meenakshi temple is situated at

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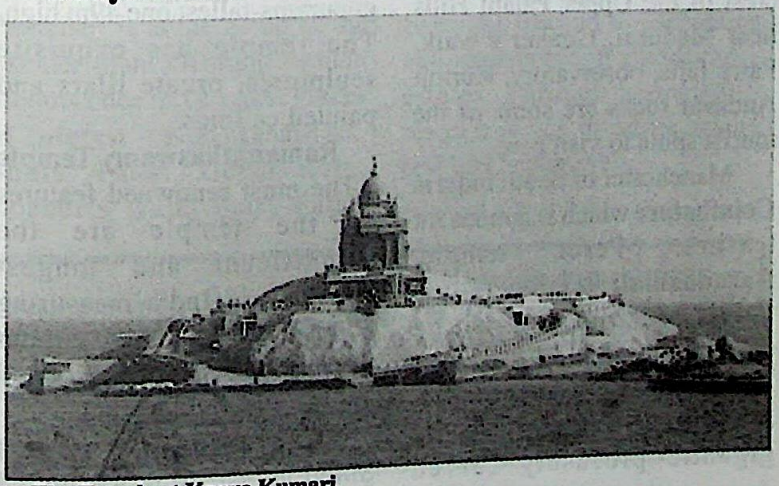
Madurai. One can go on excursions to Alagar Koil(22 kms) or Tiruparan Kundram (8 kms) away.

The sacred island town of **Rameswaram** at the extreme south-eastern limit of the Indian Peninsula, has one of India's most venerated temples. A fine example of South Indian architecture,the temple is renowned for its many pillared corridors, about 1220 metres in length. Shri Ramnathswamy Temple is a couple of kms away while Gandhamadana Parvadham is 4 kms away.

Kanyakumari is the southernmost point of peninsular India. It is the meeting point of three seas - the Bay of Bengal, the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. Besides being a pilgrim centre, it is famous for its beautiful sunrise, sunset and moonrise over the waters. The diamond nose-ring of this deity is famous for its sparkling splendour, which is visible from the sea. TheTemple is dedicated to the virgin Goddes Kanyakumari. Must see: Vivekananda Memorial.

Kodaikanal is the beautiful hillstation standing amidst sylvan beauty on the southern



The Temple at Kanya Kumari

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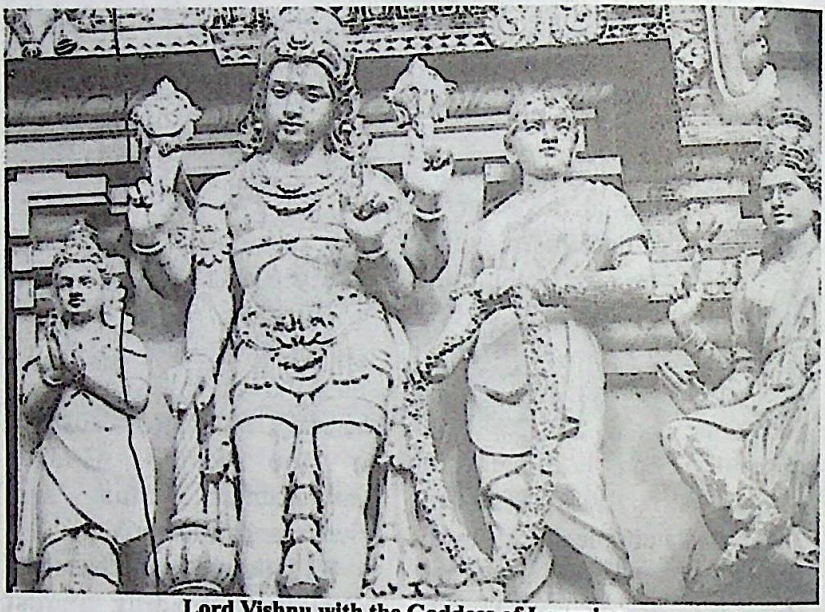

Lord Vishnu with the Goddess of Learning

crest of the Upper Palani Hills near Madurai. Coaker's walk, Fairy falls, observatory, Kurinji Andavar rocks are some of the tourist spots to visit here.

Manchester of South India is **Coimbatore** which is famous for textiles. Perur temple, Aarudhamali temple, Glass Forest Museum are visiting points of interest.

Meenakshi Temple, Madurai: Famous for its gigantic profusely carved gopurams-tallest one 49m high. The temple has exquisite sculptures, ornate illars and painted ceilings.

Ramanathaswamy Temple : The most renowned features of the temple are the magnificent and longest corridors in India measuring 4000 ft. the pillars are cut out of single pieces of granite and are beautifully decorated.

Ootacamund (Ooty) Snuggled in thickly wooded

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Nilgiris is Udhagamandalam, anglicized to Ootacamund which has been abbreviated to Ooty. Called the "Queen of the Blue Mountains" Ooty is characterized by rolling meadows, gardens and lakes; Places of Interest – Botanical Gardens, Doddabetta (2633m or 8475 ft) the highest of the Nilgiris, Mukruti Peak.

Kodaikanal: The charming hill station stands amidst the sylvan grandeur on the southern crest of the upper Palani Hills near Madurai. Kodai is among the most picturesque Hill stations. Known as "Botanists Paradise" it is the home of the wonder plant "Kurunji" which blooms once in 12 years. **Places of Interest** – Kodaikanal lake, Shola Falls, Observatory, Coaker's Walk, Fairy Fally, Silver Cascade.

Courtallam: Tirunelveli, Known as "The common man's health resort" Courtallam is situated on the southern arm of a deep bay in the Western Ghats. Places of Interest – The Main Falls (Chittar Falls), Kutralanathar Temple. Chitra Sabha, Chittaruvi, Shebhagadevi Falls, Honey Falls, Five Falls, Tiger Falls, New Falls, Old Courtallam Falls.

Yercaud : A small town which offers a quiet and restful holiday. The scenery along the entire length of the road from Salem to Yercaud is enchanting and consists of coffee and orange estates. Through a small hill resort it is rich in scenic beauty and less expensive.

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- *Bhagavad Gita*

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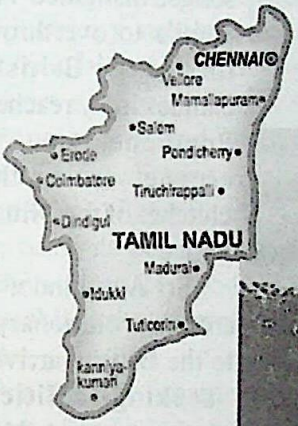
FASCINATING INDIA

Visit Pondicherry!

Arun Mittal



Churches of Pondicherry

Legend has it that the great sage Agastya came from North India to Pondicherry during the Vedic times. Pondicherry was then known as 'Vedhapuri' or 'Vedhapuram', a seat of Vedic learning and culture. He made this holy land his home.

Classical geographers trace the origins of Pondicherry to an ancient port called 'Poduke', which flourished from the 2nd Century BC. Romans settled here and regular commerce was carried out between Pondicherry and the Roman cities.

Modern Pondicherry derives its name from the Tamil word 'Puducheri', which means 'New Village'. This name may first have been coined when a new town emerged out of the European settlements.

The Ancient history of Pondichery is that, one Santhu Udayar, a professor of Tamil, stood for election to the French parliament in 1871. He lost the election to a Frenchman, but he

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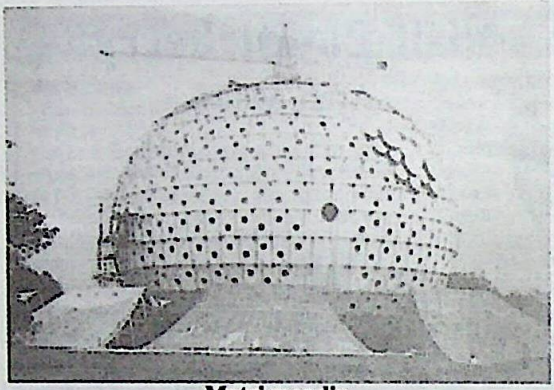

Matri mandir

Bharathi, who, through his fiery songs, instigated the Tamils to overthrow the British, clandestinely reached Pondicherry to escape from the clutches of the British police.

Sri Aurobindo, 'a very dangerous revolutionary', according to the British, arrived in 1910, seeking political asylum. Both these patriots kept the flame of freedom struggle alive. Other revolutionaries included Varahaneri Venkatesa Subramania Aiyar, an intellectual and V. Ramaswamy Iyengar, an eminent Tamil writer.

When the British were ousted from India in 1947, Pondicherry demanded French withdrawal from India too.

'Quit India' movement was launched, in which mill workers went on strike, students abstained from classes, *hartals* were observed in town. National flags were hoisted in public places and municipal buildings.

championed the cause of Indians in all walks of life. He taught the natives to be self-confident and treat the aliens, not as their superiors but as equals. In 1873, an advocate Ponnu Thambi Pillai revolted against the practice of allowing only Europeans to wear shoes inside the court. He came to court wearing shoes. When expelled by the Magistrate, he appealed to the Supreme Court in Paris and won the case.

Ponnu Thambi Pillai fought for the introduction of common laws for the Indians and the French. His nickname was 'La Porte' and today there is a street to honour him which is called the 'Rue La Porte'.

Mahakavi Subramania

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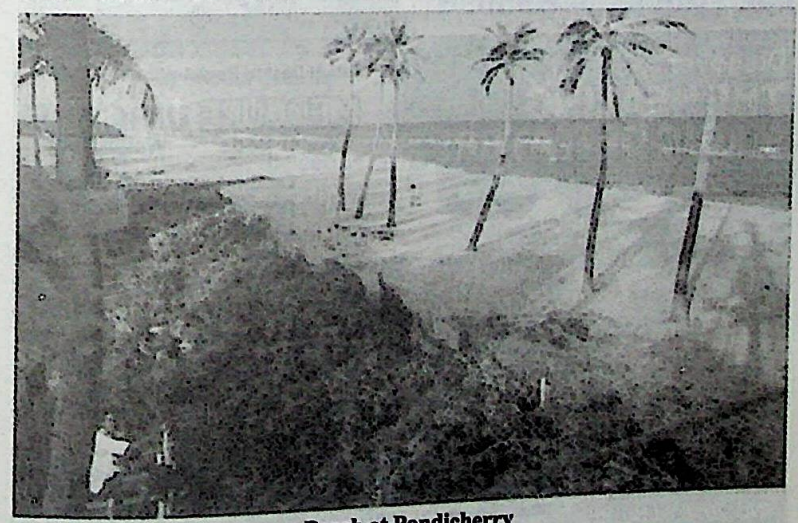
The French administration in Pondicherry retaliated with brutal and repressive measures. Electricity supply was cut off. Essential commodities went in short supply. Traffic between Pondicherry and Madras was suspended. France declared that under no circumstances would it give up its possessions in India. But on Oct. 21, 1954, all French establishments were acquired by the Indian Union and Pondicherry became an integral part of India.

Pondicherry is situated on the east coast of India – the Coromandel Coast. Pondicherry is a Union Territory ensconced within the state of Tamil Nadu. It is bound by the Bay of Bengal in the east and on the other three sides by the South Arcot district of Tamil Nadu.

At the time of the French presence in India, Pondicherry was the capital of all the French territories, which included Karaikal in Tamil Nadu, Yanam in Andhra Pradesh and Mahe in Kerala. These four regions comprise a total of 388 villages.

The commercial and cultural hub is the Boulevard Town, so



Beach at Pondicherry

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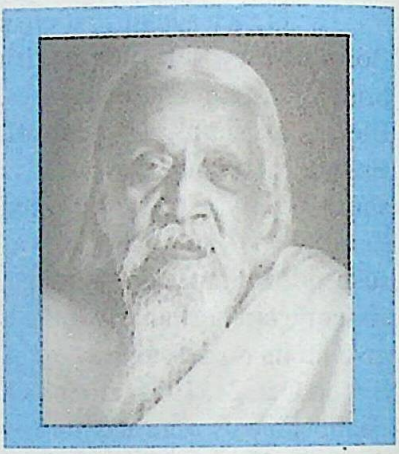
called because it is bounded by four main streets or boulevards in the North, the South, the East and the West. It is oval in shape and contains many other boulevards or streets cutting each other at right angles.

The world famous Aurobindo Ashram is situated here. Historical monuments, temples and churches, the museum, the botanical garden and other places of popular tourist interest and a huge shopping mall are all part of this oval township. The eastern boulevard, also known as the Beach Road runs parallel to the sea and has a beautifully landscaped promenade where people come to walk and relax in the evenings.



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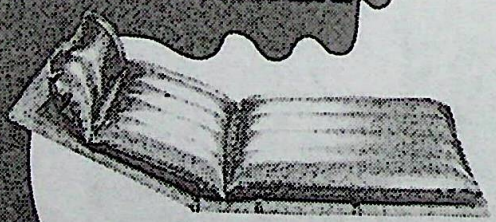

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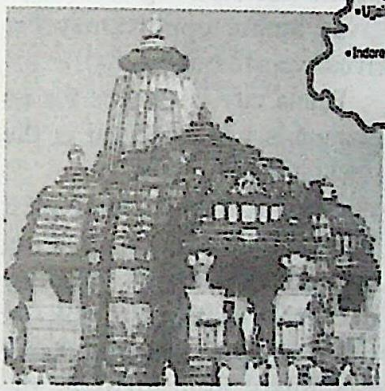
Madhya Pradesh

The Heart of India



Devi Jagdamba Temple

This state is the cultural centre of India as it has been home of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Islam

Madhya Pradesh is almost at the centre of India and is called the heart because it has been home to the cultural heritage of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Islam.

Khajuraho the famous tourist spot is fascinating. The 22 odd temples still standing are almost poems in stone. It was the capital of Chandelas in the 10th -11th centuries and have erotic figures carved on it. Though the place is sparsely populated the number of visitors during the year add to it. The annual Khajuraho festival of songs and dances is a week-long programme where all artistes of repute perform. The Tansen Music Festival in Gwalior is poignant celebrations of Indian classical dance and music.

Monuments, exquisitely

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carved temples, stupas, forts and palaces are dotted all over the State. The natural beauty of Madhya Pradesh is varied, consisting largely of a plateau, The State has mountain ranges, meandering rivers and miles of dense forests offering a unique and exciting panorama of wildlife in sylvan surroundings.

The tribal fairs and festivals held here are a celebration of ethnic lifestyles of the people.

The tribal festivals in Jhabua are marked by carefree revelry, drinking bouts and exotic entertainment like cock-fighting, uninhibited dancing, etc. Visitors do not appreciate adequately the genuine and strong tradition of democracy in tribal society, the harmonious living with nature, the respect accorded to women, the amicable sharing of the community resources. Bhopal. Indore, Jabalpore, Gwalior, Ujjain , Raipur are some of the important cities of Madhya Pradesh. Ujjain on the banks of the river Kshipra is one of the sacred cities for Hindus. It is the seat of Vikram University and was the capital of the legendary kingdom of Avanti, described in Buddhist chronicles. In the 8th century AD it became the centre of Sanskrit learning.

The marble rocks of Jabalpur are beautiful. Narmada river which flows through the state gives ample opportunity for riverlovers to boat on it.

Panna city is famous for its diamonds while Bhillai is the steel city of the state.

Sanchi Stupa : The Great Stupa is the earliest existing stone structure in India. Built by Emperor Ashoka in the 3rd Century B. C. Thousands of Buddhists from all over the world visit it as a place of pilgrimage.

Gwalior Fort : One of the oldest and most spectacular forts in India, it is built on sheer rock. Inside it there is the ornate Man Singh's palace as also the Karan, Jahangir and Shah Jahan and Gujahi Mahal palaces. The last has a museum with a fine collection of inscriptions, carvings, Gupta sculptures and miniature painintgs.

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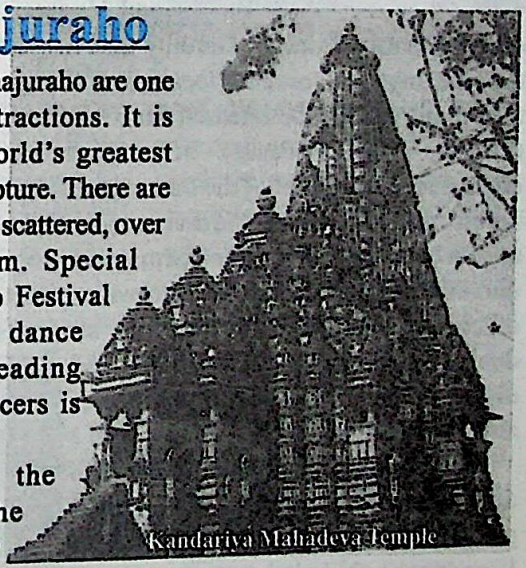
Kanha National Park : Kanha's sal and bamboo forests, rolling grasslands and meandering streams stretch over 940 sq. km in dramatic natural splendour. The park is the only habitat of the rare barasingha deer (Cervus Duvaceli Branderi). Kanha National Park is an irresistible attraction for all wildlife lovers and a true haven for its animal and avian population, including tigers.

Pachmarhi : Most verdant jewel. Each dawn at this lovely hill resort girdled by the Satpura ranges, ushers in a day of tranquil beauty; Places of Interest – Priyadarshini Point, Handi Khoh, Apsara Vihar.

Khajuraho

The temples of Khajuraho are one of India's major attractions. It is perhaps also the world's greatest display of erotic sculpture. There are 22 temples remaining scattered, over and above 21sq km. Special occasion: Khajuraho Festival (March). A dance performance by leading Indian classical dancers is held on the occasion.


Kandariya Mahadeva Temple

A feature of the sculptures is the presence of a number of figures in shocking poses. This feature has invited some strong and bitter comments. It is true that the ideas of art of the earlier period were more in keeping with modern notions and the art which these sculptures represent had different notions, not particularly pleasing to certain modern

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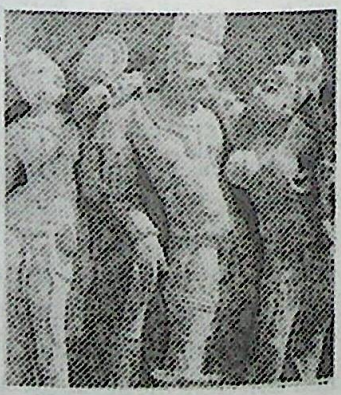
notions of art and decency. But these sculptures need not necessarily be taken merely as base representations of sensuousness in stone. They are in sacred temples held in universal esteem by the age in which they were depicted and there is bound to be some higher and esteric purpose.

The Tantric literature has mystic diagrams, esoteric mantras, Nyasas and Mudras. It is only the Diksha or the initiation from the Guru by which one is supposed to acquire the true, mystical, esoteric meaning of the apparently senseless and then alone can one be released from the *Pasas* or fetters of the Pasu (all *jivas* are called Pasus). In the spiritual ladder, this Pasu has to cross three stages-that of the Pasu or the normal man, the Vira or the heroic man and Divya or the divine man. This was a kind of discipline and whatever its vulgar forms and degenerations, the idea undoubtedly was to lead the spiritual aspirant from one stage to the other beyond all worldly attractions, sensuousness and the sense of duality. One has to go beyond likes and dislikes. In this process a number of attractions are placed before him .



The criticized figures at Khajuraho are in line with similar Tantric ideas prevalent in that age. This Tantra literature included the profound and mystical doctrines of the Saiva, Vaishnava and Sakta sacred literature. The Buddhists and Jains too had their own Tantric manuals.

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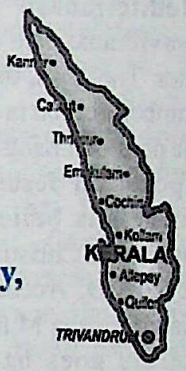
Kerala

Spiritualism and Temples of Kerala

P. N. Santhanagopal



Known as God's Own Country, Kerala is a picturesque and beautiful state

The tourist literature of Kerala describes it as God's own country. To any Keralite, no matter in which part of the globe he may be, Kerala is not part of India. To him rest of India is attached to Kerala. Any person from Kerala has a religious streak in him or her. Atheism, therefore, has no room for it in Kerala though the state is inhabited by a large number of comrades.

Kerala's religious scenario is largely made up of what has gone there from elsewhere. During the misty past, Kerala was inhabited only by primitive tribes. They worshipped a mother deity. Many of their customs and beliefs were impacted upon by the vedic Aryan namboodiri Brahmins whose influence and practices covered the entire region. They were the owners of most of the land and were virtually the rulers.

Apart from Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism Islam and Christianity and in a small way, Judaism found a home in Kerala.

Time saw the naboodiris being influenced by the animistic and ancestor-oriented practices of the original tribal inhabitants. The early inhabitants of Kerala

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were the proto-Australoids, the Mediterranean and the Dravidians. The Aryans came later. The Jews, though small in number, settled in Kerala during the period of King Solomon. The Apostle of Jesus, St.Thomas himself is believed to have introduced Christianity in Kerala in 52.A.D. According to some historians the Muslim history in Kerala goes back to the 7th century A.D., when the religion originated in Arabia. It is believed that Malik Ibn Dinar, a disciple of Prophet Muhammad was the first person who propagated Islam in Kerala.

The namboodiri Brahmins who migrated to Kerala were followers of the Vedas and firmly believed in the Varna Asrama Dharma. They considered the local inhabitants to be of low caste and found it difficult to mix with them.

The namboodiri Brahmins and the Tamil Brahmins who came later, brought Vedic religion, *yagnas*, rituals and practices to Kerala.

Over a period of time however

Theyyam

the earlier primitive practices gradually got assimilated and the amalgam became the way of life of the Hindus in Kerala.

The Theyyam

The Theyyam of Kerala tells of the absorption of the tribal customs and practices by the Aryans that permeated throughout Kerala, before the influence of Buddhism and Jainism and later, of Islam and Christianity. Theyyam signifies the transformation of the low caste people into super natural beings.The high caste namboodiri Brahmins would

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bow their heads in reverence and devotion before Theyyam, believed to possess divine powers. Devotees prayed to them for protection and favours.

At other festivals in the temple however the high caste Brahmin was in the centre and the low caste people had to remain far away from the temples.

Kerala is a temple country. The earlier cave temples of Kerala were influenced by the rock cut temples of Tamil Nadu. A temple architecture unique to Kerala originated later. Its stress and emphasis were on sanctity, simplicity and naturalism. It has a charm of its own, not seen anywhere else in the country. The temple culture of Kerala is based on vedic traditions unlike the temples in Tamil Nadu which follow the Agama traditions.

There are temples for Bhagavati, Sastha, Sankaranarayana, manifestations of Vishnu as Krishna, Parasurama, Sri Rama and Vamana for Ganesa and Subramanya. There is a link and a bond between the temple traditions of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. The Alwar saints of Tamil Nadu have sung hymns in praise of 108 vaishnava shrines and eleven out of them are located in Kerala. They are the temples of Thirunavai, Thiruvithuvakkode, Trikkakkara, Moozhikkalam, Thiruvalla, Thirukkodittaanam, Chengannur, Thiruppiliyur,

Kerala, by virtue of its temples alone should be one of the most exotic tourist attractions. Tourists in every growing numbers do visit them, drawn also by the natural beauty, its verdant forests, its festivals, lagoons, boat houses, elephants and its festivals and above all, the luxurious facilities available for treatment of Ayurveda system of treatment which the world is discovering with earnestness and interest.

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Aranmulaa, Thiruvanvandur and Thiruvananthapuram.

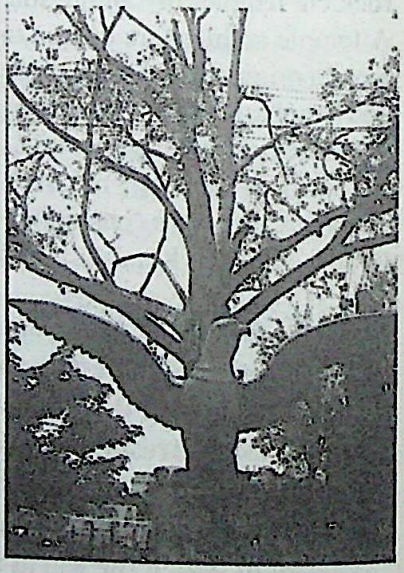
There are temples that are associated with the five Pandavas.The temple at Thirukkodittaanam is associated with Sahadeva, the Chengannur shrine with Yudhishtira, the Thiruppiliyur shrine with Bhima, the Aranmula shrine with Arjuna and Thiruvanvandur temple is associated with Nakula.

At Malanad near Kollam there is a shrine, strangely, for Duryodhana. The local inhabitants belonging to the kurava community worship at this temple. They believe that harm would visit them if they spent a night at Tiruippuliyur, associated with Bhima!

Aranmula, located inland from Chengannur has a shrine for Sri Krishna who is worshipped here as Parthasarathy. It is from Aranmula that the sacred jewels of Lord Ayyappa are taken in procession up to the *sannidhanam* at Sabarimala during the Makara Vilakku celebrations.

Thiruvananthapuram is named after its presiding deity Ananthapadmanabha Swamy. The image of the Lord reposing on the serpent Anantha is viewed through three doors. The original image was made of wood. The present image has been created using 1200 *salagramams* and shaped using a mixture of lime, granite, molasses and mustard. The Lord, in Yoga Nidra pose is offering *bilva* leaves to Lord Siva.

There are many shrines for



Garuda welcomes visitors to Guruvayoor

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Lord Subramanya but the most prominent are at Haripad and at Udayanapuram near Vaikom. Udayanapuram temple is equal in sanctity to the temple at Pazhani in Tamilnadu. The most prominent temples for Lord Sri Krishna are at Guruvayoor, Ambalapuzha and at Thrichambaram.

At Ambalaapuzha the lord is worshipped as Unnikrishnan though the deity is of Parthasarathy. There is a temple for the Naga Devata at Mannarsalaa near Haripad. The central temple contains the deity of Nagaraja and that of his divine consort Sarpayakshi. The worship is done here by a female priest.

Guruvayur: One of the most sacred and important pilgrim centres of Kerala. Also known as the Dwaraka of the South.

Kovalam Beach – Trivandrum: One of India's best beaches. Ideal for surf riding, catamarans are available. Ayurvedic oil massages & oil baths are given by experts.

Kaladi : An important pilgrimage centre since it was the birth place of Sri Adi Sankaracharya, one of India's foremost philosopher-saints; Places of Interest – Adi Shankara's shrine Sringeri shrine.

Periyar Wildlife Sanctuar : The whole area of the sanctuary abounds in lovely natural scenery in one of the most beautiful parts of India. An added attraction is its wild life.

Alleppey : Pleasant easy-going market surrounded by coconut plantations & canals. Snake boat races are an event worth seeing (August).

SWEET THOUGHT
Sri Krishna Sweets
PRODUCERS OF PURE GHEE SWEETS

KNOW THAT PURITY, PASSION AND INERTIA ARE ALL FROM ME. I AM NOT AFFECTED BY THESE CONDITIONS, BUT THEY REST IN ME.

- Bhagavad Gita

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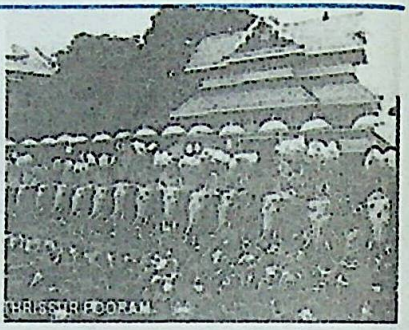
Thrissur Pooram

Thrissur Pooran falls in April every year. Sakthan Thampuran (1751-1805), the very architect of Thrissur, became the ruler of the erstwhile state Kochi. He took up the renovation of the Vaddakkannathan temple temple complex which was enclosed by high walls. The four massive gopurams of the temple have been ascribed to him. It was he who made the sprawling Thekkinkadu Maidan the major venue of Thrissur Pooram. He himself is said to have drawn up the 36-hour hectic schedule of the Pooram festival.

It is celebrated with a colourful procession of caparisoned elephants, parasol exchanges, drum concerts, display of pyro-techniques and refreshing scenes of public



participation. During the festival season, Thrissur, popularly known as the temple town turns into a town of colour, music and mirth. The Pooram programmes extending about 36 hours begins with the *ezhunellippu* of the Kanimangalam Shasta in the morning and is followed by the *ezhunnellippu* of the other six minor temples on the Pooram Day. The *ezhunnellippu* programme which is considered to be a ritual sybolising the visit of the Devi from the Paramekkavu and Thiruvambadi temples to the Vadakkunnathan temple.

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Editorial & Administrative Office : Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Kulapati Dr. K. M. Munshi Marg, Chowpatty, Mumbai—400 007.
Phone: 022-2363 1261 / 2363 4462 Fax: 022-2363 0058
E-mail: brbhavan@bom7.vsnl.net.in *or* pvsankarankutty@vsnl.net
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